A MERCURY PUBLICATION

THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy and Science Fiction

1956

35¢ OCTOBER

The Door Into Summer

a brilliant new novel by

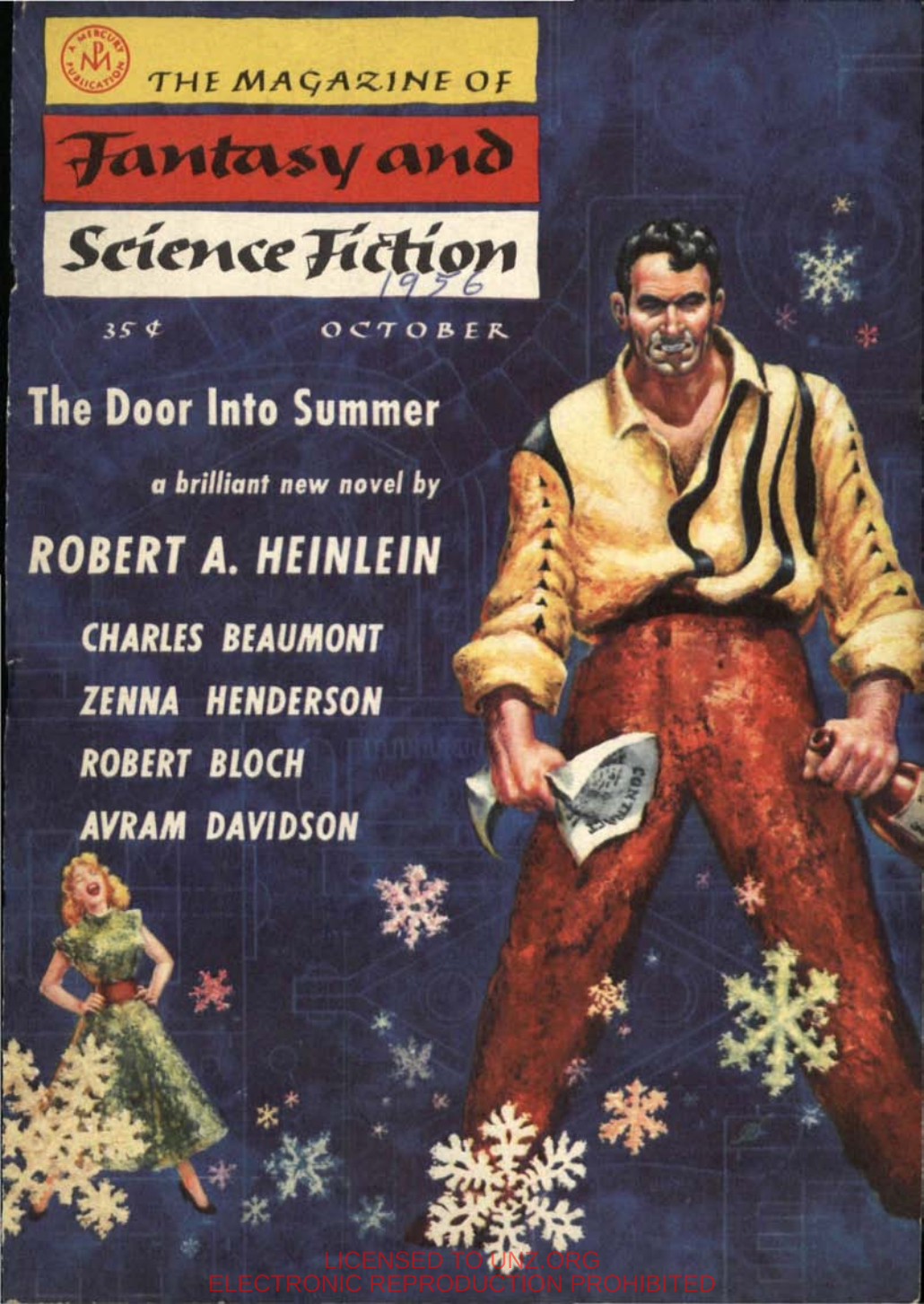
ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

CHARLES BEAUMONT

ZENNA HENDERSON

ROBERT BLOCH

AVRAM DAVIDSON



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy and Science Fiction

VOLUME 11, No. 4 OCTOBER

The Door Into Summer (*first of three parts*) *by* ROBERT A. HEINLEIN 3

I Don't Mind *by* RON SMITH 56

The Monster Show *by* CHARLES BEAUMONT 57

Anything Box *by* ZENNA HENDERSON 62

The Decline and Fall of the Bug-eyed Monster (*article*) *by* JOHN CHRISTOPHER 74

Try This for Psis *by* ROBERT BLOCH 77

Mr. Guthrie's Cold War *by* JAY WILLIAMS 93

Recommended Reading (*department*) *by* ANTHONY BOUCHER 104

Tea from Chirop Terra *by* WINONA McCLINTIC 108

King's Evil *by* AVRAM DAVIDSON 118

Sonnets in a Moonship (*verse*) *by* STARR NELSON 126

"*Coming Next Month*" *appears on page 103*

COVER PAINTING BY KELLY FREAS

(*Illustrating "The Door Into Summer"*)

Joseph W. Ferman, PUBLISHER *Anthony Boucher*, EDITOR

The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Volume 11, No. 4, Whole No. 65, OCTOBER, 1956. Published monthly by Fantasy House, Inc., at 35¢ a copy. Annual subscription, $4.00 in U. S. and Possessions, Canada, and the Pan American Union; $5.00 in all other countries. Publication office, Concord, N. H. General offices: 527 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N. Y. Editorial office, 2643 Dana St., Berkeley 4, Calif. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Concord, N. H. under the Act of March 3, 1897. Printed in U. S. A.
© 1956 by Fantasy House, Inc. All rights, including translation into other languages, reserved. Submissions must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes; the Publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.

Francis McComas, ADVISORY EDITOR; *Robert P. Mills*, MANAGING EDITOR; *George Salter*, ART EDITOR; *John A. West*, EDITORIAL ASSISTANT; *Constance Di Rienzo*, EDITORIAL SECRETARY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

READERS' BOOK SERVICE

Below is a list of many of the most important science fiction books of the past year which you may now order postpaid through F&SF. In addition, you may order any hard-cover book reviewed in this magazine during the past year. (Sorry, but we cannot offer this service on paper-bound books.)

NOVELS

135 LORD OF THE WORLD
Msgr. Robert Hugh Benson
Dodd, Mead **$3.50**

103 MARTIANS, GO HOME
Fredric Brown
Dutton **$2.75**

114 THE CITY AND THE STARS
Arthur C. Clarke
Harcourt, Brace **$3.75**

126 FEAR IS THE SAME
Carter Dickson
Morrow **$3.50**

122 DOUBLE STAR
Robert A. Heinlein
Doubleday **$2.95**

123 THE DRAGON IN THE SEA
Frank Herbert
Doubleday **$2.95**

133 BULLARD OF THE SPACE PATROL
Malcolm Jameson
World **$1.00**

90 NOT THIS AUGUST
C. M. Kornbluth
Doubleday **$2.95**

129 THE GOLDEN KAZOO
John G. Schneider
Rinehart **$3.50**

116 GOOD AS GOLD
Alfred Toombs
Crowell **$3.50**

FANTASY NOVELS

125 THE CHILDREN OF GREEN KNOWE
L. M. Boston
Harcourt, Brace **$2.75**

128 THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING
J. R. R. Tolkien
Houghton-Mifflin **$5.00**

75 TWO TOWERS
J. R. R. Tolkien
Houghton-Mifflin **$5.00**

124 THE RETURN OF THE KING
J. R. R. Tolkien
Houghton-Mifflin **$5.00**

ANTHOLOGIES

118 SCIENCE-FICTION ADVENTURES IN MUTATION
Groff Conklin
Vanguard **$3.75**

131 S-F: THE YEAR'S GREATEST SCIENCE-FICTION AND FANTASY STORIES AND NOVELETTES
Judith Merril
Gnome **$3.95**

SHORT STORIES

134 KIPLING: A SELECTION
John Beecroft
Doubleday **$5.95**

99 FAR AND AWAY
Anthony Boucher
Ballantine **$2.00**

130 REACH FOR TOMORROW
Arthur C. Clarke
Ballantine **$2.00**

117 CITIZENS IN SPACE
Robert Sheckley
Ballantine **$2.00**

NON-FICTION

120 THE SEARCH FOR BRIDEY MURPHY
Morey Bernstein
Doubleday **$3.75**

105 MYTH OR LEGEND?
G. E. Daniel & Others
Macmillan **$2.50**

102 THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN
Ralph Izzard
Doubleday **$4.00**

132 A SCIENTIFIC REPORT ON "THE SEARCH FOR BRIDEY MURPHY"
Edited by Milton V. Kline
Julian **$3.75**

119 THE VIKING ROCKET STORY
Milton W. Rosen
Harper **$3.75**

121 THE REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS
Edward J. Ruppelt
Doubleday **$4.50**

57 WHO'S WHO IN OZ
Jack Snow
Reilly & Lee **$3.75**

106 THE MOON: A COMPLETE DESCRIPTION
H. Percy Wilkins & Patrick Moore
Macmillan **$12.00**

41 INDEX TO THE SCIENCE-FICTION MAGAZINES 1926–1950
Donald B. Day
Perri **$6.50**

UNCLASSIFIABLE

113 AGE OF THE TAIL
H. Allen Smith
Little, Brown **$3.00**

JUVENILES

111 EXPLORING THE MOON
Roy A. Gallant
Garden City **$2.00**

110 STAR GUARD
Andre Norton
Harcourt, Brace **$3.00**

112 GOLDEN BOOK OF ASTRONOMY
Rose Wyler & Gerald Ames
illustrated by John Polgreen
Simon & Schuster **$3.95**

VERSE

127 THIS TILTING DUST
Leah Bodine Drake
Golden Quill **$2.00**

HUMOR

107 THE POGO PEEK-A-BOOK

108 POTLUCK POGO
Walt Kelly
Simon & Schuster each **$1.00**

109 GEORGE PRICE'S CHARACTERS
Simon & Schuster **$2.95**

I have circled below the numbers listed alongside the books I wish to order. ☐

I would also like to order other books reviewed in F&SF during the past year which do not appear on the above list. I am enclosing a separate sheet of paper containing the title, author, publisher and price of each book. ☐ (Sorry, this offer is not good on paper-bound books.)

I am enclosing a check ☐ money order ☐ (no cash or stamps) in the amount of $_____ and understand that the books will be sent me postpaid.

41 57 75 90 99 102 103 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 132 133 134 135

*Name*_____

*Address*_____

*City*_____ *Zone*_____ *State*_____

F-OCT-6

READERS' BOOK SERVICE, FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, 527 Madison Ave., N. Y. 22, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Heinlein wine needs no Boucher bush. So, without fanfare or superlatives, here is the first installment of the newest of Heinlein's rare novels for adults — a rapidly rolling adventure story in the course of which you will learn much about robots, suspended animation, the way an engineer thinks, the application of technology to the lot of women, the formalities of cat protocol, and a host of other topics including love, fraud and nudism.

The Door Into Summer

by ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

(*first of three parts*)

ONE WINTER SHORTLY BEFORE THE Six Weeks War my tomcat Petronius the Arbiter and I lived in an old farmhouse in Connecticut. I doubt if it is there any longer as it was near the edge of the blast area of the Manhattan near-miss and those old frame buildings burn like tissue paper. Even if it is still standing it would not be a desirable rental because of the fallout, but we liked it then, Pete and I. The lack of plumbing made the rent low and what had been the dining room had a good north light for my drafting board.

The drawback was that the place had eleven doors to the outside.

Twelve if you counted Pete's door. I always tried to arrange a door for Pete of his own—in this case a board fitted into a window in an unused bedroom in which I had cut a cat strainer just wide enough for Pete's whiskers. I have spent too much of my life opening doors for cats—I once calculated that, since the dawn of civilization, nine hundred and seventy-eight man-centuries have been used up that way. I could show you figures.

Pete usually used his own door, except when he could bully me into opening a people door for him, which he preferred. But he *would not* use his door when there was snow on the ground.

While still a kitten, all fluff and buzzes, Pete had worked out a simple philosophy. I was in charge of quarters, rations, and weather; he was in charge of everything else. But he held me especially responsible for weather. Connecticut

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

winters are good only for Christmas cards; regularly that winter Pete would check his own door, refuse to go out it because of that unpleasant white stuff beyond (he was no fool), then badger me to open a people door.

He had a fixed conviction that at least one of them must lead into summer weather. Each time this meant that I had to go around with him to each of eleven doors, hold it open while he satisfied himself that it was winter out that way, too, then go on to the next door, while his criticisms of my mismanagement grew more bitter with each disappointment.

Then he would stay indoors until hydraulic pressure utterly forced him outside. When he returned the ice in his pads would sound like little clogs on the wooden floor and he would glare at me and refuse to purr until he had chewed it all out . . . whereupon he would forgive me until the next time.

But he never gave up his search for the "door into summer."

On December 3, 1970, I was looking for it, too.

My quest was about as hopeless as Pete's had been in a Connecticut January. What little snow there was in Southern California was kept on mountains for skiers, not in downtown Los Angeles—the stuff probably couldn't have pushed through the smog anyway. But winter was in my heart.

I was not in bad health (aside from a cumulative hangover), I was still on the right side of thirty by a few days, and I was far from being broke. No police were looking for me, nor any husbands, nor any process servers; there was nothing wrong that a slight case of amnesia would not have cured. But there was winter in my heart and I was looking for the door into summer.

If I sound like a man with an acute case of self-pity, you are correct. There must have been well over two billion people on this planet in worse shape than I was. Nevertheless, I was looking for the Door into Summer.

Most of the ones I had checked lately had been swinging doors, like the pair in front of me then—the Sans Souci Bar Grill the sign said. I went in, picked a booth halfway back, placed the overnight bag I was carrying carefully on the seat, slid in by it, and waited for the waiter.

The overnight bag said, "Waarrrh?"

I said, "Take it easy, Pete."

"Naaow!"

"Nonsense, you just went. Pipe down, the waiter is coming."

Pete shut up. I looked up as the waiter leaned over the table and said to him, "A double shot of your bar scotch, a glass of plain water, and a split of ginger ale."

The waiter looked upset. "Ginger ale, sir? With scotch?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Do you have it, or don't you?"

"Why, yes, of course. But—"

"Then fetch it. I'm not going to drink it; I just want to sneer at it. And bring a saucer, too."

"As you say, sir." He polished the table top. "How about a small steak, sir? Or the scallops are very good today."

"Look, mate, I'll tip you for the scallops if you'll promise not to serve them. All I need is what I ordered . . . and don't forget the saucer."

He shut up and went away. I told Pete again to take it easy, the Marines had landed. The waiter returned, his pride appeased by carrying the split of ginger ale on the saucer. I had him open it while I mixed the scotch with the water. "Would you like another glass for the ginger ale, sir?"

"I'm a real buckaroo; I drink it out of the bottle."

He shut up and let me pay him and tip him, not forgetting a tip for the scallops. When he had gone I poured ginger ale into the saucer and tapped on the top of the overnight bag. "Soup's on, Pete."

It was unzipped; I never zipped it with him inside. He spread it with his paws, poked his head out, looked around quickly, then levitated his forequarters and placed his front feet on the edge of the table. I raised my glass and we looked at each other. "Here's to the female race, Pete—find 'em and forget 'em!"

He nodded; it matched his own philosophy perfectly. He bent his head daintily and started lapping up ginger ale. "If you can, that is," I added and took a deep swig. Pete did not answer. Forgetting a female was no effort to him; he was the natural-born bachelor type.

Facing me, through the window of the bar, was a sign that kept changing. First it would read: WORK WHILE YOU SLEEP. Then it would say: AND DREAM YOUR TROUBLES AWAY. Then it would flash in letters twice as big:

MUTUAL ASSURANCE COMPANY

I read all three several times without thinking about them. I knew as much and as little about suspended animation as everybody else did. I had read a popular article or so when it was first announced and two or three times a week I'd get an insurance company ad about it in the morning mail; I usually chucked them without looking at them since they didn't seem to apply to me any more than lipstick ads did.

In the first place, until shortly before then, I could not have paid for cold-sleep; it's expensive. In the second place, why should a man who was enjoying his work, was making money, expected to make more, was in love and about to be married, commit semi-suicide?

If a man had an incurable disease and expected to die anyhow

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but thought the doctors a generation later might be able to cure him—and he could afford to pay for suspended animation while medical science caught up with what was wrong with him—then cold-sleep was a logical bet. Or if his ambition was to make a trip to Mars and he thought that clipping one generation out of his personal movie film would enable him to buy a ticket, I supposed that was logical, too—there had been a news story about a café-society couple who got married and went right straight from city hall to the sleep sanctuary of Western World Insurance Company with an announcement that they had left instructions not to be called until they could spend their honeymoon on an interplanetary liner . . . although I had suspected that it was a publicity gag, rigged by the insurance company, and that they had ducked out the back door under assumed names. Spending your wedding night cold as a frozen mackerel does not have the ring of truth in it.

And there was the usual straightforward financial appeal, the one the insurance companies bore down on: *"Work while you sleep."* Just hold still and let whatever you have saved grow into a fortune. If you are 55 and your retirement fund pays you $200 a month, why not sleep away the years, wake up still 55 and have it pay you $1,000 a month? To say nothing of waking up in a bright new world which would probably promise you a much longer and healthier old age in which to enjoy the $1,000 a month? That one they really went to town on, each company proving with incontrovertible figures that its selection of stocks for its trust fund made more money faster than any of the others. *"Work while you sleep!"*

It had never appealed to me. I wasn't 55, I didn't want to retire, and I hadn't seen anything wrong with 1970.

Until recently, that is to say. Now I was retired whether I liked it or not (I didn't), instead of being on my honeymoon I was sitting in a second-rate bar drinking scotch purely for anesthesia, instead of a wife I had one much-scarred tomcat with a neurotic taste for ginger ale, and as for liking right now, I would have swapped it for a case of gin and then busted every bottle.

But I wasn't broke.

I reached into my coat and took out an envelope, opened it. It had two items in it. One was a certified check for more money than I had ever had before at one time; the other was a stock certificate in Hired Girl, Inc. They were both getting a little mussed; I had been carrying them ever since they were handed to me.

Why not?

Why not duck out and sleep my troubles away? Pleasanter than

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

joining the Foreign Legion, less messy than suicide, and it would divorce me completely from the events and the people who had made my life go sour. So why not?

I wasn't terribly interested in the chance to get rich. Oh, I had read H. G. Wells's *The Sleeper Awakes* not only when the insurance companies started giving away free copies but before that, when it was just another classic novel; I knew what compound interest and stock appreciation could do. But I was not sure that I had enough money both to buy the Long Sleep and to set up a trust large enough to be worthwhile. The other argument appealed to me more: go beddy-bye and wake up in a different world. Maybe a lot better world, the way the insurance companies would have you believe . . . or maybe worse. But certainly different.

I could make sure of one important difference: I could doze long enough to be certain that it was a world without Belle Darkin—or Miles Gentry, either, but Belle especially. If Belle was dead and buried I could forget her, forget what she had done to me, cancel her out . . . instead of gnawing my heart with the knowledge that she was only a few miles away.

Let's see, how long would that have to be? Belle was 23—or claimed to be (I recalled that once she had seemed to let slip that she remembered Roosevelt as President). Well, in her twenties, anyhow. If I slept 70 years, she'd be an obituary. Make it 75 and be safe.

Then I remembered the strides they were making in geriatrics: they were talking about 120 years as an attainable "normal" life span. Maybe I would have to sleep 100 years. I wasn't certain that any insurance company offered that much.

Then I had a gently fiendish idea, inspired by the warm glow of scotch. It wasn't necessary to sleep until Belle was dead; it was enough, more than enough, and just the fitting revenge on a female to be *young* when she was *old*. Just enough younger to rub her nose in it—say about 30 years.

I felt a paw, gentle as a snowflake, on my arm. "Mooorrre!" announced Pete.

"Greedy gut," I told him and poured him another saucer of ginger ale. He thanked me with a polite wait, then started lapping it.

But he had interrupted my pleasantly nasty chain of thought. What the devil could I do about Pete?

You can't give away a cat the way you can a dog; they won't stand for it. Sometimes they go with the house, but not in Pete's case; to him I had been the one stable thing in a changing world ever since he was taken from his mother nine years earlier . . . I had even managed to keep him near me in the Army, and that takes real wangling.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He was in good health and likely to stay that way, even though he was held together with scar tissue. If he could just correct a tendency to lead with his right he would be winning battles and siring kittens for another five years at least.

I could pay to have him kept in a kennel until he died (unthinkable!) or I could have him chloroformed (equally unthinkable)—or I could abandon him. That is what boils down to with a cat: you either carry out the Chinese obligation you have assumed—or you abandon the poor thing, let it go wild, destroy its faith in the eternal rightness.

The way Belle had destroyed mine.

So, Danny Boy, you might as well forget it. Your own life may have gone as sour as dill pickles; that did not excuse you in the slightest from your obligation to carry out your contract to this super-spoiled cat.

Just as I reached that philosophical truth Pete sneezed; the bubbles had gone up his nose. "Gesundheit," I answered, "and quit trying to drink it so fast."

Pete ignored me. His table manners averaged better than mine and he knew it. Our waiter had been hanging around the cash register, talking with the cashier. It was the after-lunch slump and the only other customers were at the bar. The waiter looked up when I said, "Gesundheit," and spoke to the cashier. They both looked our way, then the cashier lifted the flap gate in the bar and headed toward us.

I said quietly, "M.P.'s, Pete."

He glanced around and ducked down into the bag; I pushed the top together. The cashier came over and leaned on my table, giving the seats on both sides of the booth a quick double-O. "Sorry, friend," he said flatly, "but you'll have to get that cat out of here."

"What cat?"

"The one you were feeding out of that saucer."

"I don't see any cat."

This time he bent down and looked under the table. "You've got him in that bag," he accused.

"Bag? Cat?" I said wonderingly. "My friend, I think you've come down with an acute figure of speech."

"Huh? Don't give me any fancy language. You've got a cat in that bag. Open it up."

"Do you have a search warrant?"

"What? Don't be silly."

"You're the one talking silly, demanding to see the inside of my bag without a search warrant. Fourth Amendment—and the War has been over for years. Now that we've settled that, please tell my waiter to make it the same all around—or fetch it yourself."

He looked pained. "Brother, this isn't anything personal, but I've got a license to consider. 'No dogs, no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cats'—it says so right up there on the wall. We aim to run a sanitary establishment."

"Then your aim is poor." I picked up my glass. "See the lipstick marks? You ought to be checking your dishwasher, not searching your customers."

"I don't see no lipstick."

"I wiped most of it off. But let's take it down to the Board of Health and get the bacteria count checked."

He sighed. "You got a badge?"

"No."

"Then we're even. I don't search your bag and you don't take me down to the Board of Health. Now if you want another drink, step up to the bar and have it . . . on the house. But not here." He turned and headed up front.

I shrugged. "We were just leaving anyhow."

As I started to pass the cashier's desk on my way out he looked up. "No hard feelings?"

"Nope. But I was planning to bring my horse in here for a drink later. Now I won't."

"Suit yourself. The ordinance doesn't say a word about horses. But just one more thing: Does that cat really drink ginger ale?"

"Fourth amendment, remember?"

"I don't want to see the animal; I just want to know."

"Well," I admitted, "he prefers it with a dash of bitters, but he'll drink it straight if he has to."

"It'll ruin his kidneys. Look here a moment, friend."

"At what?"

"Lean back so that your head is close to where mine is. Now look up at the ceiling over each booth . . . the mirrors up in the decorations. I *knew* there was a cat there —because I saw it."

I leaned back and looked. The ceiling of the joint had a lot of junky decoration, including many mirrors; I saw now that a number of them, camouflaged by the design, were so angled as to permit the cashier to use them as periscopes without leaving his station. "We need that," he said apologetically. "You'd be shocked at what goes on in those booths . . . if we didn't keep an eye on 'em. It's a sad world."

"Amen, brother." I went on out.

Once outside I opened the bag and carried it by one handle; Pete stuck his head out. "You heard what the man said, Pete. 'It's a sad world.' Worse than sad, when two friends can't have a quiet drink together without being spied on. That settles it."

"Now?" asked Pete.

"If you say so. If we're going to do it, there's no point in stalling."

"Now!" Pete answered emphatically.

"Unanimous. It's right across the street."

The receptionist at the Mutual Assurance Company was a fine ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED.

ample of the beauty of functional design. In spite of being streamlined for about Mach 4 she displayed frontal-mounted radar housings and everything else needed for her basic mission. I reminded myself that she would be Whistler's Mother by the time I was out and told her that I wanted to see a salesman.

"Please be seated. I will see if one of our client executives is free." Before I could sit down she added, "Our Mr. Powell will see you. This way, please."

Our Mr. Powell occupied an office which made me think that Mutual did pretty well for itself. He shook hands moistly, sat me down, offered me a cigarette, and attempted to take my bag. I hung onto it. "Now, sir, how can we serve you?"

"I want the Long Sleep."

His eyebrows went up and his manner became more respectful. No doubt Mutual would write you a camera floater for seven bucks but the Long Sleep let them get their patty-paws on *all* of a client's assets. "A very wise decision," he said reverently. "I wish I were free to take it myself. But . . . family responsibilities, you know." He reached out and picked up a form. "Sleep clients are usually in a hurry. Let me save you time and bother by filling this out for you . . . and we'll arrange for your physical examination at once."

"Just a moment."

"Eh?"

"One question. Are you set up to arrange cold-sleep for a cat?"

He looked surprised, then pained. "You're jesting."

I opened the top of the bag; Pete stuck his head out. "Meet my sidekick. Just answer the question, please. If the answer is 'no,' I want to sashay up to Central Valley Liability. Their offices are in this same building, aren't they?"

This time he looked horrified. "Mister—uh, I didn't get your name?"

"Dan Davis."

"Mr. Davis, once a man enters our door he is under the benevolent protection of Mutual Assurance. I *couldn't* let you go to Central Valley."

"How do you plan to stop me? Judo?"

"Please! Our company is an ethical company."

"Meaning that Central Valley is not?"

"I didn't say that; you did. Mr. Davis, don't let me sway you—"

"You won't."

"—but get sample contracts from each company. Get a lawyer, better yet, get a licensed semanticist. Find out what we offer—and actually deliver—and compare it with what Central Valley claims to offer." He glanced around again and leaned toward me. "I shouldn't say this—and I do hope you won't quote me—but they don't even use the standard actuarial tables."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Maybe they give the customer a break instead."

"What? My dear Mr. Davis, we distribute every accrued benefit. Our charter requires it . . . while Central Valley is a stock company."

"Maybe I should buy some of their—look, Mr. Powell, we're wasting time. Will Mutual accept my pal here? Or not? If not, I've been here too long already."

"You mean you want to pay to have that creature preserved alive in hypothermia?"

"I mean I want both of us to take the Long Sleep. And don't call him 'that creature'; his name is Petronius."

"Sorry. I'll rephrase my question. You are prepared to pay two custodial fees to have both of you, you and, uh, 'Petronius,' committed to our sanctuary?"

"Yes. But not two standard fees. Something extra, of course, but you can stuff us both in the same coffin; you can't honestly charge as much for Pete as you charge for a man."

"This is most unusual."

"Of course it is. But we'll dicker over the price later . . . or I'll dicker with Central Valley. Right now I want to find out if you can do it."

"Uh . . ." He drummed on his desk top. "Just a moment." He picked up his phone and said, "Opal, get me Dr. Berquist." I didn't hear the rest of the conversation for he switched on the privacy guard. But after a while he put down the instrument and smiled as if a rich uncle had died. "Good news, sir! I had overlooked, momentarily, the fact that the first successful experiments were made on cats. The techniques and critical factors for cats are fully established. In fact there is a cat at the Naval Research Laboratory in Annapolis which is and has been for more than twenty years alive in hypothermia."

"I thought NRL was wiped out when they got Washington?"

"Just the surface buildings, sir, not the deep vaults. Which is a tribute to the perfection of the technique; the animal was unattended save by automatic machinery for more than two years . . . yet it still lives, unchanged, unaged. As you will live, sir, for whatever period you elect to entrust yourself to Mutual."

I thought he was going to cross himself. "OK, OK, now let's get on with the dicker."

There were four factors involved: first, how to pay for our care while we were hibernating; second, how long I wanted us to sleep; third, how I wanted my money invested while I was in the freezer; and last, what happened if I conked out and never woke up.

I finally settled on the year 2000, a nice round number and only 30 years away. I was afraid that if I made it any longer I would be completely out of touch. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

changes in the last 30 years (my own life time) had been enough to bug a man's eyes out—two big wars and a dozen little ones, the downfall of communism—the Great Panic, the artificial satellites, the change to atomic power—why, when I was a kid they didn't even have multimorphs.

I might find 2000 A.D. pretty confusing. But if I didn't jump that far Belle would not have time to work up a fancy set of wrinkles.

When it came to how to invest my dough I did not consider government bonds and other conservative investments; our fiscal system has inflation built into it. I decided to hang onto my Hired Girl stock and put the cash into other common stock, with a special eye to some trends I thought would grow. Automation was bound to get bigger. I picked a San Francisco fertilizer firm, too; it had been experimenting with yeasts and edible algae—there were more people every year and steak wasn't going to get any cheaper. The balance of the money I told him to put into the company's managed trust fund.

But the real choice lay in what to do if I died in hibernation. The company claimed that the odds were better than seven out of ten that I would live through 30 years of cold-sleep . . . and the company would take either end of the bet. The odds weren't reciprocal and I didn't expect them to be; in any honest gambling there is a breakage to the house. Only crooked gamblers claim to give the sucker the best of it, and insurance is legalized gambling. The oldest and most reputable insurance firm in the world, Lloyd's of London, makes no bones about it—Lloyd's associates will take either end of any bet. But don't expect better-than-track odds; somebody has to pay for Our Mr. Powell's tailor-made suits.

I chose to have every cent go to the company trust fund in case I died . . . which made Mr. Powell want to kiss me and made me wonder just how optimistic those seven-out-of-ten odds were. But I stuck with it because it made me an heir (if I lived) of everyone else with the same option (if they died)—Russian roulette with the survivors picking up the chips . . . and with the company, as usual, raking in the house percentage.

I picked every alternative for the highest possible return and no hedging if I guessed wrong; Mr. Powell loved me, the way a croupier loves a sucker who keeps playing the zero. By the time we had arranged my estate he was anxious to be reasonable about Pete; we settled for 15% of the human fee to pay for Pete's hibernation, and drew up a separate contract for him.

There remained consent of court and the physical examination. The physical I didn't worry about; I had a hunch that once I elected to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have the company bet that I would die they would accept me even in the last stages of the Black Death. But I thought that getting a judge to OK it might be lengthy. It had to be done, because a client in cold-sleep was legally in chancery, alive but helpless.

I needn't have worried. Our Mr. Powell had quadruplicate originals made of nineteen different papers, I signed till I got finger cramps, and a messenger rushed away with them while I went to my physical examination; I never even saw the judge.

The physical was the usual tiresome routine except for one thing. Toward the end the examining physician looked me sternly in the eye and said, "Son, how long have you been on this binge?"

"Binge?"

"Binge."

"What makes you think that, Doctor? I'm as sober as you are. 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled—' "

"Knock it off and answer me."

"Mmm . . . I'd say about two weeks. A little over."

"Compulsive drinker? How many times have you pulled this stunt in the past?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I haven't. You see—" I started to tell him what Belle and Miles had done to me, why I felt the way I did.

He shoved a palm at me. "Please. I've got troubles of my own and I'm not a psychiatrist. Really all I'm interested in is finding out whether or not your heart will stand up under the ordeal of putting you down to four degrees centigrade. Which it will. And I ordinarily don't care why anyone is nutty enough to crawl into a hole and pull it in after him; I just figure it is one less damn fool underfoot. But some residual tinge of professional conscience prevents me from letting any man, no matter how sorry a specimen, climb into one of those coffins while his brain is sodden with alcohol. Turn around."

"Huh?"

"Turn around; I'm going to inject you in your left buttock." I did and he did. While I was rubbing it, he went on, "Now drink this. In about twenty minutes you will be more sober than you've been in a month. Then, if you have any sense—which I doubt—you can review your position and decide whether to run away from your troubles . . . or stand up to them like a man."

I drank it.

"That's all; you can get dressed. I'm signing your papers, but I'm warning you that I can veto it right up to the last minute. No more alcohol for you at all, a light supper and no breakfast. Be here at noon tomorrow for final check."

He turned away and didn't even say goodby. I dressed and went out of there, sore as a boil. Powell

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had all my papers ready. When I picked them up he said, "You can leave them here, if you wish, and pick them up at noon tomorrow . . . the set that goes in the vault with you, that is."

"What happens to the others?"

"We keep one set ourselves; then after you are committed, we file one set with the court and one in the Carlsbad Archives. Uh, did the doctor caution you about diet?"

"He certainly did." I glanced at the papers to cover my annoyance.

Powell reached for them. "I'll keep them safe overnight."

I pulled them back. "I can keep them safe. I might want to change some of these stock selections."

"Uh, it's rather late for that, my dear Mr. Davis."

"Don't rush me. If I do make any changes, I'll come in early." I opened the overnight bag and stuck the papers down in a side flap beside Pete. I had kept valuable papers there before; while it might not be as safe as the public archives in the Carlsbad Caverns, it was safer than you might think. A sneak thief had tried to take something out of that flap on another occasion; he must still have the scars of Pete's teeth and claws.

II

My car was parked under Pershing Square where I had left it earlier in the day. I dropped money into the parking attendant, set the bug on arterial-west, got Pete out and put him on the seat and relaxed.

Or tried to relax. Los Angeles traffic was too fast and too slashingly murderous for me to be really happy under automatic control; I wanted to redesign their whole installation—it was not a really modern "fail safe." By the time we were west of Western Avenue and could go back on manual control I was edgy and wanted a drink. "There's an oasis, Pete."

"Blurrrt?"

"Right ahead."

But while I was looking for a place to park—Los Angeles was safe from invasion; the invaders wouldn't find a place to park—I recalled the doctor's order not to touch alcohol.

So I told him emphatically what he could do with his orders.

Then I wondered if he could tell, almost a day later, whether or not I had taken a drink. I seemed to recall some technical article, but it had not been in my line and I had just skimmed it.

Damnation, he was quite capable of refusing to let me cold-sleep. I'd better play it cagey and lay off the stuff.

"Now?" inquired Pete.

"Later. We're going to find a drive-in instead." I suddenly realized that I didn't want a drink; I wanted food and a night's sleep. Doc was correct; I was more sober and felt better than I had in weeks.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Maybe that shot in the fanny had been nothing but B-1; if so, it was jet-propelled. So we found a drive-in restaurant, I ordered chicken in the rough for me and a half pound of hamburger and some milk for Pete, and took him out for a short walk while it was coming. Pete and I ate in drive-ins a lot because I didn't have to sneak him in and out.

A half hour later I let the car drift back out of the busy circle, stopped it, lit a cigarette, scratched Pete under the chin and thought.

Dan, my boy, the Doc was right; you've been trying to dive down the neck of a bottle. That's OK for your pointy head but it's too narrow for your shoulders. Now you're cold sober, you've got your belly crammed with food and it's resting comfortably for the first time in days. You feel better.

What else? Was the Doc right about the rest of it? Are you a spoiled infant? Do you lack the guts to stand up to a set back? Why are you taking this step? Is it the spirit of adventure? Or are you simply hiding from yourself, like a Section Eight trying to crawl back into his mother's womb?

But I *do* want to do it, I told myself—the year 2000. Boy!

OK, so you want to. But do you have to run off without settling the beefs you have right here?

All right, all right!—but *how* can I settle them? I don't want Belle back, not after what she's done. And what else can I do? Sue them? Don't be silly, I've got no evidence—and anyhow, nobody ever wins a law suit but the lawyers.

Pete said, "Wellll? Y'know!"

I looked down at his waffle-scarred head. Pete wouldn't sue anybody; if he didn't like the cut of another cat's whiskers, he simply invited him to come out and fight like a cat. "I believe you're right, Pete. I'm going to look up Miles, tear his arm off, and beat him over the head with it until he talks. We can take the Long Sleep afterwards. But we've got to know just what it was they did to us and who rigged it."

There was a phone booth back of the stand. I called Miles, found him at home, and told him to stay there; I'd be out.

My old man named me Daniel Boone Davis, which was his way of declaring for personal liberty and self-reliance. I was born in 1940, a year when everybody was saying that the individual was on the skids and the future belonged to mass man. Dad refused to believe it; naming me was a note of defiance. He died under brain-washing in North Korea, trying to the last to prove his thesis.

When the Six Weeks War came along I had a degree in mechanical engineering and was in the army. I had not used my degree to try for a commission, because the one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thing Dad had left me was an overpowering yen to be on my own, taking no orders, keeping no schedules—I simply wanted to serve my hitch and get out. When the Cold War boiled over, I was a sergeant-technician at Sandia Weapons Center in New Mexico stuffing atoms in atom bombs and planning what I would do when my time was up. The day Sandia disappeared I was down in Dallas, drawing a fresh supply of *Schrecklichkeit.* The fall-out on that was toward Oklahoma City, so I lived to draw my G.I. benefits.

Pete lived through it for a similar reason. I had a buddy Miles Gentry, a veteran called back to duty. He had married a widow with one daughter, but his wife had died about the time he was called back. He lived off post with a family in Albuquerque so as to have a home for his stepchild Frederica. Little Ricky (we never called her "Frederica") took care of Pete for me. Thanks to the cat god Bubastis, Miles and Ricky and Pete were away on a 72 that awful weekend—Ricky took Pete with them because I could not take him to Dallas.

I was as surprised as anyone when it turned out we had divisions stashed away at Thule and other places that no one suspected. It had been known since the thirties that the human body could be chilled until it slowed down to almost nothing. But it had been a laboratory trick, or a last-resort therapy, until the Six Weeks War. I'll say this for military research: if money and men can do it, it gets results. Print another billion, hire another thousand scientists and engineers, then in some incredible, left-handed, inefficient fashion, the answers come up. Stasis, cold-sleep, hibernation, hypothermia, reduced metabolism, call it what you will—the logistics-medicine research teams had found a way to stack people like cordwood and use them when needed. First you drug the subject, then hypnotize him, then cool him down and hold him precisely at four degrees centigrade; that is to say, at the maximum density of water with no ice crystals. If you need him in a hurry he can be brought up by diathermy and post-hypnotic command in ten minutes (they did it in seven at Nome), but such speed tends to age the tissues and may make him a little stupid from then on. If you aren't in a hurry, two hours minimum is better. The quick method is what professional soldiers call a "calculated risk."

The whole thing was a risk the enemy had not calculated so when the war was over I was paid off instead of being liquidated or sent to a slave camp, and Miles and I went into business together about the time the insurance companies started selling cold-sleep.

We went to the Mojave Desert, set up a small factory in an Air

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Force surplus building and started making Hired Girl, my engineering and Miles's law and business experience. Yes, I invented Hired Girl and all her kinfolk—Window Willie and the rest—even though you won't find my name on them. While I was in the service I had thought hard about what one engineer can do. Go to work for Standard, or Du Pont, or General Motors? Thirty years later they gave you a testimonial dinner and a pension. You haven't missed any meals, you've had a lot of rides in company airplanes. But you are never your own boss. The other big market for engineers is civil service—good starting pay, good pensions, no worries, 30 days annual leave, liberal benefits. But I had just had a long government vacation and wanted to be my own boss.

What was there small enough for one engineer and not requiring six million man-hours before the first model was on the market? Bicycle shop engineering with peanuts for capital the way Ford and the Wright brothers had started. People said those days were gone forever; I didn't believe it.

Automation was booming—chemical engineering plants that required only two gauge-watchers and a guard, machines that printed tickets in one city and marked the space *"sold"* in six other cities, steel moles that mined coal while the UMW boys sat back and watched. So while I was on Uncle Sam's payroll I soaked up all the electronics, linkages, and cybernetics that a "Q" clearance would permit.

What was the last thing to go automatic? Answer: any housewife's house. I didn't attempt to figure out a sensible, scientific house; women didn't want one; they simply wanted a better-upholstered cave. But housewives were still complaining about the Servant Problem long after servants had gone the way of the mastodon. I had rarely met a housewife who did not have a touch of slaveholder in her; they seemed to think there really *ought* to be straping peasant girls grateful for a chance to scrub floors fourteen hours a day and eat table scraps at wages a plumber's helper would scorn.

That's why we called the monster "Hired Girl"—it brought back thoughts of the semi-slave immigrant girl whom Grandma used to bully. Basically it was just a better vacuum cleaner and we planned to market it at a price competitive with ordinary suck brooms.

What Hired Girl would do (the first model, not the semi-intelligent robot I developed it into) was to clean floors . . . any floor, all day long and without supervision. And there never was a floor that didn't need cleaning.

It swept, or mopped, or vacuum-cleaned, or polished, consult-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing tapes in its idiot memory to decide which. Anything larger than a beebee shot it picked up and placed in a tray on its upper surface, for someone brighter to decide whether to keep or throw away. It went quietly looking for dirt all day long, in search curves that could miss nothing, passing over clean floors in its endless search for dirty floors. It would get out of a room with people in it, like a well-trained maid, unless its mistress caught up with it and flipped a switch to tell the poor thing it was welcome. Around dinner time it would go to its stall and soak up a quick charge—this was before we installed the everlasting power pack.

There was not too much difference between Hired Girl, Mark One, and a vacuum cleaner. But the difference—that it would clean without supervision—was enough; it sold.

I swiped the basic prowl pattern from the "Electric Turtles" that were written up in *Scientific American* in the late forties, lifted a memory circuit out of the brain of a guided missile (that's the nice thing about top-secret gimmicks; they don't get patented), and I took the cleaning devices and linkages out of a dozen things, including a floor polisher used in army hospitals, a soft-drink dispenser, and those "hands" they use in atomics plants to handle anything "hot." There wasn't anything really new in it; it was just the way I put it together. The "spark of genius" required by our laws lay in getting a good patent lawyer.

The real genius was in the production engineering: the whole thing could be built with standard parts ordered out of Sweet's Catalog, with the exception of two 3-dimensional cams and one printed circuit. The circuit we subcontracted; the cams I made myself in the shed we called our "factory" using war-surplus automated tools. At first, Miles and I were the whole assembly line—bash to fit, file to hide, paint to cover. The pilot model cost $4317.09; the first hundred cost just over $39 each—and we passed them on to a Los Angeles discount house at $60 and they sold them for $85. We had to let them go on consignment to unload them at all since we could not afford sales promotion, and we darn near starved before receipts started coming in. Then *Life* ran a 2-page on Hired Girl . . . and it was a case of having enough help to assemble the monster.

Belle Darkin joined us soon after that. Miles and I had been pecking out letters on a 1908 Underwood; we hired her as a typewriter jockey and bookkeeper and rented an electric machine with executive type face and carbon ribbon and I designed a letterhead. We were ploughing it all back into the business and Pete and I were sleeping in the shop while Miles and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ricky had a nearby shack. We incorporated in self-defense. It takes three to incorporate; we gave Belle a share of stock and designated her secretary-treasurer. Miles was president and general manager; I was chief engineer and chairman of the board . . . with 51% of the stock.

I want to make clear why I kept control. I wasn't a hog; I simply wanted to be my own boss. Miles worked like a trouper, I give him credit. But better than 60% of the savings that got us started were mine, and 100% of the inventiveness and engineering. Miles could not possibly have built Hired Girl whereas I could have built it with any of a dozen partners, or possibly without one—although I might have flopped in trying to make money out of it; Miles was a businessman while I am not.

But I wanted to be certain that I retained control of the shop—and I granted Miles equal freedom in the business end . . . too much freedom, it turned out.

Hired Girl, Mark One, was selling like beer at a ball game and I was kept busy for a while improving it and setting up a real assembly line and putting a shop master in charge, then I happily turned to thinking up more household gadgets. Amazingly little real thought had been given to housework, even though it is at least 50% of all work in the world. The women's magazines talked about "labor-saving in the home" and "functional kitchens," but it was just prattle: their pretty pictures showed living-working arrangements essentially no better than those in Shakespeare's day; the horse-to-jetplane revolution had not reached the home.

I stuck to my conviction that housewives were reactionaries. No "machines for living"—just gadgets to replace the extinct domestic servant, that is, for cleaning and cooking and baby tending.

I got to thinking about dirty windows and that ring around the bath tub that is so hard to scrub, since you have to bend double to get at it. It turned out that an electrostatic device could make dirt go *spung!* off any polished silica surface, window glass, bathtubs, toilet bowls—anything of that sort. That was Window Willie and it's a wonder that somebody hadn't thought of him sooner. I held him back until I had him down to a price that people could not refuse. Do you know what window washing used to cost by the hour?

I held Willie out of production much longer than suited Miles. He wanted to sell it as soon as it was cheap enough, but I insisted on one more thing: Willie had to be easy to repair. The great shortcoming of most household gadgets was that the better they were and the more they did the more certain they were to get out of order when you needed them most—and then require an expert at five dollars an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hour to make them mote again. Then the same thing will happen the following week, if not to the dishwasher, then to the airconditioner . . . .usually late Saturday night during a snow storm.

I wanted my gadgets to work and keep on working and not to cause ulcers in their owners.

But gadgets do get out of order, even mine. Until that great day with no moving parts, machinery will continue to go sour. If you stuff a house with gadgets, some of them will always be out of order.

But military research does get results and the military had licked this problem years earlier. You simply can't lose a battle, lose thousands or millions of lives, maybe the war itself, just because some gadget the size of your thumb breaks down. For military purposes they used a lot of dodges—"fail safe," stand-by circuits, "tell me three times," and so forth. But one they used that made sense for household equipment was the plug-in component principle.

It is a moronically simple idea: don't repair, replace. I wanted to make every part of Window Willie which could go wrong a plug-in unit, then include a set of replacements with each Willie. Some components would be thrown away, some would be sent out for repair, but Willie himself would never break down longer than necessary to plug in the replacement part.

Miles and I had our first row. I said the decision as to when to go from pilot model to production was an engineering one; he claimed that it was a business decision. If I hadn't retained control, Willie would have gone on the market just as maddeningly subject to acute appendicitis as all other sickly, half-engineered "labor-saving" gadgets.

Belle Darkin smoothed over the row. If she had turned on the pressure I might have let Miles start selling Willie before I thought it was ready, for I was as goofed up about Belle as is possible for a man to be.

Belle was not only a perfect secretary and office manager, she also had personal specs which would have delighted Praxiteles and a fragrance which affected me the way catnip does Pete. With top-notch office girls as scarce as they were, when one of the best turns out to be willing to work for a shoestring company at a below-standard salary one really ought to ask "why?"—but we didn't even ask where she had worked last, so happy were we to have her dig us out of the flood of paperwork that marketing Hired Girl had caused.

Later on I would have indignantly rejected any suggestion that we should have checked on Belle, for by then her bust measurement had seriously warped my judgment. She let me explain how lonely my life had been until she came along and she answered

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gently that she would have to know me better but that she was inclined to feel the same way.

Shortly after she smoothed out the quarrel between Miles and myself she agreed to share my fortunes. "Dan darling, you have it in you to be a great man . . . and I have hopes that I am the sort of woman who can help you."

"You certainly are!"

"Shush, darling. But I am not going to marry you right now and burden you with kids and worry you to death. I'm going to work with you and build up the business first. Then we'll get married."

I objected but she was firm. "No, darling. We are going a long way, you and I. Hired Girl will be as great a name as General Electric. But when we marry I want to forget business and just devote myself to making you happy. But first I must devote myself to your welfare and your future. Trust me, dear."

So I did. She wouldn't let me buy her the expensive engagement ring I wanted to buy; instead I signed over to her some of my stock as a betrothal present. I went on voting it, of course. Thinking back, I'm not sure who thought of that present.

I worked harder than ever after that, thinking about wastebaskets that would empty themselves and a linkage to put dishes away after the dishwasher was through. Everybody was happy . . . everybody but Pete and Ricky, that is. Pete ignored Belle, as he did anything he disapproved of but could not change, but Ricky was really unhappy.

My fault. Ricky had been "my girl" since she was a six-year-old at Sandia, with hair ribbons and big solemn dark eyes. I was "going to marry her" when she grew up and we would both take care of Pete. I thought it was a game we were playing, and perhaps it was, with little Ricky serious only to the extent that it offered her eventual full custody of our cat. But how can you tell what goes on in a child's mind?

I am not sentimental about kids. Little monsters, most of them, who don't civilize until they are grown and sometimes not then. But little Frederica reminded me of my own sister at that age, and besides, she liked Pete and treated him properly. I think she liked me because I never talked down (I had resented that myself as a child) and took her Brownie activities seriously. Ricky was OK; she had quiet dignity and was not a banger, not a squealer, not a lap climber. We were friends, sharing the responsibility for Pete, and so far as I knew, her being "my girl" was just a sophisticated game we were playing.

I quit playing it after my sister and mother got it the day they bombed us. No conscious decision —I just didn't feel like joking and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

never went back to it. Ricky was seven then; she was ten by the time Belle joined us and possibly eleven when Belle and I became engaged. She hated Belle with an intensity that I think only I was aware of, since it was expressed only by reluctance to talk to her—Belle called it "shyness" and I think Miles thought it was, too.

But I knew better and tried to talk Ricky out of it. Did you ever try to discuss with a sub-adolescent something the child does not want to talk about? You'll get more satisfaction shouting in Echo Canyon. I told myself it would wear off, as Ricky learned how very lovable Belle was.

Pete was another matter and if I had not been in love I would have seen it as a clear sign that Belle and I would never understand each other. Belle "liked" my cat—oh, sure, sure! She adored cats and she loved my incipient bald spot and admired my choice in restaurants and she liked everything about me.

But liking cats is hard to fake to a cat person. There are cat people and there are others, more than a majority probably, who "cannot abide a harmless, necessary cat." If they try to pretend, out of politeness or any reason, it shows, because they don't understand how to treat cats—and cat protocol is more rigid than that of diplomacy.

It is based on self respect and mutual respect and it has the same flavor as the *dignidad de hombre* of Latin America which you may offend only at risk to your life.

Cats have no sense of humor, they have terribly inflated egos, and they are very touchy. If somebody asked me why it was worth anyone's time to cater to them I would be forced to answer that there is no logical reason. I would rather explain to someone who detests sharp cheeses why he "ought to like" Limburger. Nevertheless I fully sympathize with the mandarin who cut off a priceless embroidered sleeve because a kitten was sleeping on it.

Belle tried to show that she "liked" Pete by treating him like a dog . . . so she got scratched. Then, being a sensible cat, he got out in a hurry and stayed out a long time—which was well, as I would have smacked him, and Pete has never been smacked, not by me. Hitting a cat is worse than useless; a cat can be disciplined only by patience, never by blows.

So I put iodine on Belle's scratches, then tried to explain what she had done wrong. "I'm sorry it happened—I'm terribly sorry! But it will happen again if you do that again."

"But I was just petting him!"

"Uh, yes . . . but you weren't cat-petting him; you were dog-petting him. You must never pat a cat, you stroke it. You must never make sudden movements in range of its claws. You must never touch it without giving it a chance to see

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that you are about to . . . and you must always watch to see that it likes it. If it doesn't want to be petted, it will put up with a little out of politeness—cats are very polite—but you can tell if it is merely enduring it and stop before its patience is exhausted." I hesitated. "You don't like cats, do you?"

"What? Why, how silly! Of course I like cats." But she added, "I haven't been around them much. She's pretty touchy, isn't she?"

"'He.' Pete is a he-male cat. No, actually he's not touchy, since he's always been well treated. But you do have to learn how to behave with cats. Uh, you must never laugh at them."

"What? Forevermore, *why?*"

"Not because they aren't funny; they're extremely comical. But they have no sense of humor and it offends them. Oh, a cat won't scratch you for laughing; he'll simply stalk off and you'll have trouble making friends with him. But it's not too important. Knowing how to pick up a cat is much more important. When Pete comes back in I'll show you how."

But Pete didn't come back in, not then, and I never showed her. Belle didn't touch him after that. She spoke to him and acted as if she liked him, but she kept her distance and he kept his. I put it out of my mind; I couldn't let so trivial a thing make me doubt the woman who was more to me than anything in life.

But the subject of Pete almost reached a crisis later. Belle and I were discussing where we were going to live. She still wouldn't set the date but we spent a lot of time on such details. I wanted a ranchette near the plant; she favored a flat in town, until we could afford a Bel-Air estate.

I said, "Darling, it's not practical; I've got to be near the plant. Besides, did you ever try to take care of a tomcat in a city apartment?"

"Oh, that! Look, darling, I'm glad you mentioned it. I've been studying up on cats, I really have. We'll have him altered. Then he'll be much gentler and perfectly happy in a flat."

I stared at her, unable to believe my ears. Make a eunuch of that old warrior? Change him into a fireside decoration? "Belle, you don't know what you're saying!"

She tut-tutted me with the old familiar "Mother knows best," giving the stock arguments of people who mistake cats for property . . . how it wouldn't hurt him, that it was really for his own good, how she knew how much I valued him and she would never think of depriving me of him, how it was really very simple and quite safe and better for everybody.

I cut in on her. "Why don't you arrange it for both of us?"

"What, dear?"

"Me, too. I'd be much more docile and I'd stay home nights and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I'd never argue with you. As you pointed out, it doesn't hurt and I'd probably be a lot happier."

She turned red. "You're being preposterous."

"So are you!"

She never mentioned it again. Belle never let a difference of opinion degenerate into a row; she shut up and bided her time. But she never gave up, either. In some ways she had a lot of cat in her . . . which may have been why I couldn't resist her.

I was glad to drop the matter. I was up to here in Flexible Frank. Willie and Hired Girl were bound to make us lots of money, but I had a bee in my bonnet about the perfect, all-work household automaton, the general-purpose servant. All right, call it a robot, though that is a much abused word and I had no notion of building a mechanical man.

I wanted a gadget which could do *anything* inside the home—cleaning and cooking, of course, but also really hard jobs, like changing a baby's diaper, or replacing a typewriter ribbon. Instead of a stable of Hired Girls and Window Willies and Nursemaid Nans and Houseboy Harrys and Gardener Gus's I wanted a man and wife to be able to buy one machine for, oh, say about the price of a good automobile, which would be the equal of the Chinese servant you read about but no one in my generation had ever seen.

If I could do that, it would be the Second Emancipation Proclamation, freeing women from their age-old slavery. I wanted to abolish the old saw about how "women's work is never done." Housekeeping is repetitious and unnecessary drudgery; as an engineer it offended me.

For the problem to be within the scope of one engineer almost all of Flexible Frank had to be standard parts and must not involve any new principles. Basic research is no job for one man alone; this had to be development from former art, or I couldn't do it.

Fortunately there was an awful lot of former art in engineering and I had not wasted my time while under a "Q" clearance. What I wanted wasn't as complicated as the things a guided missile was required to do.

Just what did I want Flexible Frank to do? Answer: any work a human being does around a house. He didn't have to play cards, eat, sleep, or make love, but he did have to clean up after the card game, cook, make beds, and tend babies—at least he had to keep track of a baby's breathing and call someone if it changed. I decided he did not have to answer telephone calls as A.T.&T. was already renting a gadget for that. There was no need for him to answer the door, either, as most new houses were being equipped with door answerers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But to do the multitude of things I wanted him to do he had to have hands, eyes, ears, and a brain . . . a good-enough brain.

Hands I could order from the atomics-engineering equipment companies who supplied Hired Girl's hands, only this time we would want the best, with wide-range servos and with the delicate feedback required for microanalysis manipulations and for weighing radioactive isotopes. The same companies could supply eyes—only they could be simpler, since Frank would not have to see and manipulate from behind yards of concrete reactor plant.

The ears I could buy from any of a dozen radio-TV houses—though I might have to do some circuit designing to have his hands controlled simultaneously by sight, sound, and touch feedback the way the human hand is controlled.

But you can do an awful lot in a small space with transistors and printed circuits.

Frank wouldn't have to use stepladders. I would make his neck stretch like an ostrich and his arms extend like lazy tongs. Should I make him able to go up and down stairs?

Well, there was a powered wheelchair that could. Maybe I should buy one and use it for the chassis, limiting the pilot model to a space no bigger than a wheelchair and no heavier than such a chair could carry—that would give me a set of parameters. I'd tie its power and steering into Frank's brain.

The brain was the real hitch. You can build a gadget linked like a man's skeleton, or even much better. You can give it a feedback control system good enough to drive nails, scrub floors, crack eggs—or not crack eggs. But unless it has that stuff between the ears that a man has, it is not a man, it's not even a corpse.

Fortunately I didn't need a human brain; I just wanted a docile moron, capable of largely repetitive household jobs.

Here is where the Thorsen memory tubes came in. The intercontinental missiles we had struck back with "thought" with Thorsen tubes, and traffic control systems in places like Los Angeles used an idiot form of them. No need to go into theory of an electronic tube that even Bell Labs doesn't understand too well: the point is that you can hook a Thorsen tube into a control circuit, direct the machine through an operation by manual control and the tube will "remember" what was done and can direct the operation *without* a human supervisor a second time, or any number of times. For an automated machine tool this is enough; for guided missiles and for Flexible Frank you add side circuits that give the machine "judgment." Actually it isn't judgment (in my opinion a machine can never have judgment); the side circuit is a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hunting circuit, the programing of which says "look for so-and-so within such-and-such limits; when you find it, carry out your basic instruction." The basic instruction can be as complicated as you can crowd into one Thorsen memory tube—which is a *very* wide limit indeed!—and you can program so that your "judgment" circuits (moronic backseat drivers, they are) can interrupt the basic instructions any time the cycle does not match that originally impressed into the Thorsen tube.

This meant that you need cause Flexible Frank to clear the table and scrape the dishes and load them into the dishwasher only once, and from then on he could cope with any dirty dishes he ever encountered. Better still, he could have an electronically duplicated Thorsen tube stuck into his hand and could handle dirty dishes the first time he ever encountered them . . . and never break a dish.

Stick another "memorized" tube alongside the first one and he could change a wet baby first time, and never, never, never stick a pin in the baby.

Frank's square head could easily hold a hundred Thorsen tubes, each with an electronic "memory" of a different household task. Then throw a guard circuit around all the "judgment" circuits, a circuit which required him to hold still and squawl for help if he ran into something not covered by his instructions—that way you wouldn't use up babies or dishes.

So I did build Frank on the framework of a powered wheelchair. He looked like a hatrack making love to an octopus . . . but, boy, how he could polish silverware!

Miles looked over the first Frank, watched him mix a martini and serve it, then go around emptying and polishing ashtrays (never touching ones that were clean), open a window and fasten it open, then go to my bookcase and dust and tidy the books in it. Miles took a sip of his martini and said, "Too much vermouth."

"It's the way I like them. But we can tell him to fix yours one way and mine another; he's got plenty of blank tubes in him. Flexible.

Miles took another sip. "How soon can he be engineered for production?"

"Uh, I'd like to fiddle with him for about ten years." Before he could groan I added, "But we ought to be able to put a limited model into production in five."

"Nonsense! We'll get you plenty of help and have a Model-T job ready in six months."

"The devil you will. This is my *magnum opus.* I'm not going to turn him loose until he is a work of art . . . about a third that size, everything plug-in replaceable but the Thorsens, and so all-out flexi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ble that he'll not only wind the cat and wash the baby, he'll even play ping-pong if the buyer wants to pay for the extra programing." I looked at him; Frank was quietly dusting my desk and putting every paper back exactly where he found it. "But ping-pong with him wouldn't be much fun; he'd never miss. No, I suppose we could teach him to miss with a random-choice circuit. Mmm . . . yes, we could. We will; it would make a nice selling demonstration."

"One year, Dan, and not a day over. I'm going to hire somebody away from Loewy to help you with the styling."

I said, "Miles, when are you going to learn that I boss the engineering? Once I turn him over to you, he's yours . . . but not a split second before."

Miles answered, "It's still too much vermouth."

I piddled along with the help of the shop mechanics until I had Frank looking less like a three-car crash and more like something you might want to brag about to the neighbors. In the meantime I smoothed a lot of bugs out of his control system. I even taught him to stroke Pete and scratch him under his chin in such a fashion that Pete liked it—and, believe me, that takes negative feedback as exact as anything used in atomics labs. Miles didn't crowd me, although he came in from time to time and watched the progress. I did most of my work at night, coming back after dinner with Belle and taking her home. Then I would sleep most of the day, arrive late in the afternoon, sign whatever papers Belle had for me, see what the shop had done during the day, then take Belle out to dinner again. I didn't try to do much before then, because creative work makes a man stink like a goat. After a hard night in the lab shop nobody could stand me but Pete.

Just as we were finishing dinner one day Belle said to me, "Going back to the shop, dear?"

"Sure. Why not?"

"Good. Because Miles is going to meet us there."

"Huh?"

"He wants a stockholders' meeting."

"A stockholders' meeting? Why?"

"It won't take long. Actually, dear, you haven't been paying much attention to the firm's business lately. Miles wants to gather up loose ends and settle some policies."

"I've been sticking close to the engineering. What else am I supposed to do for the firm?"

"Nothing, dear. Miles says it won't take long."

"What's the trouble? Can't Jake handle the assembly line?"

"Please, dear. Miles didn't tell me why. Finish your coffee."

Miles was waiting for us at the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plant and shook hands as solemnly as if we had not met in a month. I said, "Miles, what's this all about?"

He turned to Belle. "Get the agenda, will you?" This alone should have told me that Belle had been lying when she claimed that Miles had not told her what he had in mind. But I did not think of it—hell, I *trusted* Belle!—and my attention was distracted by something else, for Belle went to the safe, spun the knob, and opened it.

I said, "By the way, dear, I tried to open that last night and couldn't. Have you changed the combination?"

She was hauling papers out and did not turn. "Didn't I tell you? The patrol asked me to change it after that burglar scare last week."

"Oh. You'd better give me the new numbers, or some night I'll have to phone one of you at a ghastly hour."

"Certainly." She closed the safe and said, "Let's get started."

I answered, "OK. Darling, if this is a formal meeting, I guess . . . uh, Wednesday November 18, 1970, nine twenty P.M., all stockholders present—put our names down—D. B. Davis, chairman of the board and presiding. Any old business?"

There wasn't any. "OK, Miles, it's your show. Any new business?"

Miles cleared his throat. "I want to review the firm's policies, present a program for the future, and have the board consider a financing proposal."

"Financing? Don't be silly. We're in the black and doing better every month. What's the matter, Miles? Dissatisfied with your drawing account? We could boost it."

"We wouldn't stay in the black, under the new program. We need a broader capital structure."

"What new program?"

"Please, Dan. I've gone to the trouble of writing it up in detail. Let Belle read it to us."

"Well . . . OK."

Skipping the gobbledegook—like all lawyers, Miles was fond of polysyllables—Miles wanted to do three things: (*a*) take flexible Frank away from me, hand it over to a production engineering team, and get it on the market without delay; (*b*)—but I stopped it at that point. "No!"

"Wait a minute, Dan. As president and general manager, I'm certainly entitled to present my ideas in an orderly manner. Save your comments. Let Belle finish reading."

"Well . . . all right. But the answer is still 'no.'"

Point (*b*) was in effect that we should quit frittering around as a one-horse outfit. We had a big thing, as big as the automobile had been, and we were in at the start; therefore we should at once expand and set up organization for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nationwide and worldwide selling and distribution.

I started drumming on the table. I could just see myself as Chief Engineer of an outfit like that. They probably wouldn't even let me have a drafting table and if I picked up a soldering gun the union would pull a strike. I might as well have stayed in the army and tried to make general.

But I didn't interrupt. Point (*c*) was that we couldn't do this on pennies; it would take millions. Mannix Enterprises would put up the dough—what it amounted to was that we would sell out to Mannix, lock, stock and Flexible Frank, and become a daughter corporation. Miles would stay on as division manager and I would stay on as chief research engineer, but the free old days would be gone; we'd both be hired hands.

"Is that all?" I said.

"Mmm . . . yes. Let's discuss it and take a vote."

"There ought to be something in there granting us the right to sit in front of the cabin at night and sing spirituals."

"This is no joke, Dan. This is how it's got to be."

"I wasn't joking. A slave needs privileges to keep him quiet. OK, is it my turn?"

"Go ahead."

I put up a counterproposal, one that had been growing in my mind. I wanted us to get out of production. Jake Schmidt, our production shop master, was a good man; nevertheless I was forever being jerked out of a warm creative fog to straighten out bugs in production—which is like being dumped out of a warm bed into ice water. This was the real reason why I had been doing so much night work and staying away from the shop in the daytime. With more war-surplus buildings being moved in and a night shift contemplated I could see the time coming when I would get no peace to create, even though we turned down this utterly unpalatable plan to rub shoulders with General Motors and Consolidated. I certainly was not twins; I couldn't be both inventor and production manager.

So I proposed that we get smaller instead of bigger: license Hired Girl and Window Willie, let some one else build and sell them, while we raked in the royalties. When Flexible Frank was ready we would license him, too. If Mannix wanted the licenses and would outbid the market, swell! Meantime, we'd change our name to Davis & Gentry Research Corporation and hold it down to just the three of us, with a machinist or two to help me jackleg new gadgets. Miles and Belle could sit back and count the money as it rolled in.

Miles shook his head slowly. "No, Dan. Licensing would make us some money, granted. But not nearly the money we would make if we did it ourselves."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Confound it, Miles, we wouldn't be doing it ourselves; that's just the point. We'd be selling our souls to the Mannix people. As for money, how much do you want? You can use only one yacht, or one swimming pool, at a time . . . and you'll have both before the year is out, if you want them."

"I don't want them."

"What *do* you want?"

He looked up. "Dan, you want to invent things. This plan lets you do so, with all the facilities and all the help and all the expense money in the world. Me, I want to run a big business. A *big* business. I've got the talent for it." He glanced at Belle. "I don't want to spend my life sitting out here in the middle of the Mojave Desert acting as business manager to one lonely inventor."

I stared at him. "You didn't talk that way at Sandia. You want out, Pappy? Belle and I would hate to see you go . . . but if that is the way you feel, I guess I could mortgage the place or something and buy you out. I wouldn't want any man to feel tied down." I was shocked to my heels, but if old Miles was restless, I had no right to hold him to my pattern.

"No, I don't want out; I want us to grow. You heard my proposal. It's a formal motion, for action by the corporation. I so move."

I guess I looked puzzled. "You insist on doing it the hard way? OK, Belle, the vote is 'no.' Record it. But I won't put up my counter-proposal tonight. We'll talk it over and exchange views. I want you to be happy, Miles."

Miles said stubbornly, "Let's do this properly. Roll call, Belle."

"Very well, sir. Miles Gentry, voting stock shares number—" She read off the serial numbers. "How say you?"

"Aye."

"Daniel B. Davis, voting stock shares number—" She read off a string of telephone numbers again; I didn't listen to the formality. "How say you?"

"No. And that settles it. I'm sorry, Miles."

"Belle S. Darkin," she went on, "voting shares number—" She recited figures again. "I vote 'Aye.'" My mouth dropped open, then I managed to stop gasping and say, "But, Baby, you can't do that! Those are your shares, sure, but you know perfectly well that—"

"Announce the tally," Miles growled.

"The 'ayes' have it. The proposal is carried."

"Record it."

The next few minutes were confused. First I yelled at her, then I reasoned with her, then I snarled and told her that what she had done was not honest—true, I had assigned the stock to her but she knew as well as I did that I always voted it, that I had had no intention of parting with control of the company, that it was an engage-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment present, pure and simple. Hell, I had even paid the income tax on it last April. If she could pull a stunt like this when we were engaged, what was our marriage going to be like?

She looked right at me and her face was utterly strange to me. "Dan Davis, if you think we are still engaged after the way you have talked to me, you are even stupider than I've always known you were." She turned to Gentry. "Will you take me home, Miles?"

"Certainly, my dear."

I started to say something, then shut up and stalked out of there, without my hat. It was high time to leave, or I would probably have killed Miles, since I couldn't touch Belle.

I didn't sleep, of course. About four A.M. I got out of bed, made phone calls, agreed to pay more than it was worth, and by five-thirty was in front of the plant with a pick-up truck. I went to the gate, intending to unlock it and drive the truck to the loading dock, so that I could run Flexible Frank over the tailgate—Frank weighed 400 pounds.

There was a new padlock on the gate.

I shinnied over, cutting myself on barbed wire. Once inside, the gate would give me no trouble, as there were a hundred tools in the shop capable of coping with a padlock.

But the lock on the front door had been changed too.

I was looking at it, deciding whether it was easier to break a window with a tire iron, or get the jack out of the truck and brace it between the door frame and the knob, when somebody shouted, "Hey, you! Hands up!"

I didn't put my hands up but I turned around. A middle-aged man was pointing a hogleg at me. "Who the devil are you?"

"Who are you?"

"I'm Dan Davis, Chief Engineer of this outfit."

"Oh." He relaxed a little but still aimed the field mortar at me. "Yeah, you match the description. But if you have any identification on you, better let me see it."

"Why should I? I asked who *you* are?"

"Me? Nobody you'd know. Name of Joe Todd, with the Desert Protective & Patrol Company. Private license. You ought to know who we are; we've had you folks as clients for the night patrol for months. But tonight I'm on as special guard."

"You are? Then if they gave you a key to the place, use it. I want to get in. And quit pointing that blunderbuss at me."

He still kept it leveled at me. "I couldn't rightly do that, Mr. Davis. First place, I don't have a key. Second place, I had particular orders about you. You aren't to go in. I'll let you out the gate."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I want the gate opened, all right, but I'm going in." I looked around for a rock to break a window.

"Please, Mr. Davis . . ."

"Huh?"

"I'd hate to see you insist, I really would. Because I couldn't chance shooting you in the legs; I ain't a very good shot. I'd have to shoot you in the belly. I've got soft-nosed bullets in this iron; it'd be pretty messy."

I suppose that was what changed my mind, though I would like to think it was something else; *i.e.*, when I looked again through the window I saw that Flexible Frank was not where I had left him.

As he let me out the gate Todd handed me an envelope. "They said to give this to you if you showed up."

I read it in the cab of the truck. It said:

November 18, 1970

Dear Mr. Davis,

At a regular meeting of the Board of Directors, held this date, it was voted to terminate all your connection (other than as stockholder) with the corporation, as permitted under paragraph three of your contract. It is requested that you stay off company property. Your personal papers and belongings will be forwarded to you by safe means.

The board wishes to thank you for your services and regrets the differences in policy opinion which have forced this step on us.

Sincerely yours,
Miles Gentry
Chairman of the Board
and General Manager
by B. S. Darkin, *Sec'y-Treasurer*

I read it twice before I recalled that I had never had any contract with the corporation under which to invoke paragraph three or any other paragraph.

Later that day a bonded messenger delivered a package to the motel where I kept my clean underwear. It contained my hat, my desk pen, my other slide rule, a lot of books and personal correspondence, and a number of documents. But it did not contain my notes and drawings for Flexible Frank.

Some of the documents were very interesting. My "contract," for example—sure enough, paragraph three let them fire me without notice subject to three month's salary. But paragraph seven was even more interesting. It was the latest form of the yellow-dog clause, one in which the employee agrees to refrain from engaging in a competing occupation for five years by letting his former employers pay him cash to option his services on a first-refusal basis, *i.e.*, I could go back to work any time I wanted to, just by going hat in hand and asking Miles and Belle for a job—maybe that was why they sent the hat back.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But for five long years I could not work on household appliances without asking them first. I would rather have cut my throat.

There were copies of assignments of all patents, duly registered, from me to Hired Girl, Inc., for Hired Girl and Window Willie and a couple of minor things. (*Flexible Frank*, of course, had never been patented—well, I didn't *think* he had been patented; I found out the truth later.)

But I had never assigned any patents, I hadn't even formally licensed their use to Hired Girl, Inc.; the corporation was my own creature and there hadn't seemed to be any hurry about it.

The last three items were my stock shares certificate (those I had not given to Belle), a certified check, and a letter explaining each item of the check—accumulated "salary" less drawing account disbursements, three months extra salary in lieu of notice, option money to invoke "paragraph seven" . . . and a $1,000 bonus to express "appreciation of services rendered." That last was real sweet of them.

While I reread that amazing collection I had time to realize that I had probably not been too bright to sign everything that Belle put in front of me. There was no possible doubt that the signatures were mine.

I steadied down enough the next day to talk it over with a lawyer, a very smart and money-hungry lawyer, one who didn't mind kicking and clapper-clawing and biting in the clinches. At first he was anxious over my exhibits and listening to the details he sat back and laced his fingers over his belly and looked sour. "Dan, I'm going to give you some advice and it's not going to cost you anything."

"Well?"

"Do nothing. You haven't got a prayer."

"But you said—"

"I know what I said. They rooked you. But how can you prove it? They were too smart to steal your stock, or cut you off without a penny. They gave you exactly the deal you could have reasonably expected if everything had been kosher and you had quit, or had been fired, over—as they express it—a difference of policy opinion. They gave you everything you had coming to you . . . and a measly thousand to boot, just to show there are no hard feelings."

"But I didn't *have* a contract! And I *never* assigned those patents!"

"These papers say you did. You admit that's your signature. Can you prove what you say by anyone else?"

I thought about it. I certainly could not. Not even Jake Schmidt knew anything that went on in the front office. The only witnesses I had were . . . Miles and Belle.

"Now about that stock assignment," he went on, "that's the one

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chance to break the log jam. If you—"

"But that is the only transaction in the whole stack that really *is* legitimate. I signed over that stock to her."

"Yes, but why? You say that you gave it to her as an engagement present, in expectation of marriage. Never mind how she voted it; that's beside the point. If you can prove that it was given as a betrothal gift, in full expectation of marriage, and that she knew it when she accepted it, you can force her either to marry you, or to disgorge. McNulty *vs.* Rhodes. Then you're in control again and you kick them out. Can you prove it?"

"Damn it, I don't want to marry her now. I wouldn't have her."

"That's your problem. But one thing at a time. Have you any witnesses or any evidence, letters or anything, which would tend to show that she accepted it understanding that you were giving it to her as your future wife?"

I thought. Sure, I had witnesses . . . the same old two, Miles and Belle.

"You see? With nothing but your word against both of theirs plus a pile of written evidence, you not only won't get anywhere, but you might wind up committed to a Napoleon factory with a diagnosis of paranoia. My advice to you is to get a job in some other line . . . or at the very most go ahead and buck their yellow-dog contract by setting up a competitive business—I'd like to see that phraseology tested, as long as I didn't have to fight it myself. But don't charge them with conspiracy. They'll win, then they'll sue you and clean you out of what they let you keep." He stood up.

I took only part of his advice. There was a bar on the ground floor of the same building; I went in and had a couple or nine drinks.

I had plenty of time to recall all this while I was driving out to see Miles. Once we had started making money he had moved Ricky and himself to a nice little rental in San Fernando Valley to get out of the murderous Mojave heat and had started commuting via the Air Force Slot. Ricky wasn't there now, I was happy to recall; she was up at Big Bear Lake at Girl Scout camp—I didn't want to chance Ricky's being witness to a row between me and her stepdaddy.

I was bumper to bumper in Sepulveda Tunnel when it occurred to me that it would be smart to get the certificate for my Hired Girl stock off my person before going to see Miles. I did not expect any rough stuff (unless I started it) but it just seemed a good idea . . . like a cat who has had his tail caught in the screen door once, I was permanently suspicious.

Leave it in the car? Suppose I was hauled in for assault and bat-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tery; it wouldn't be smart to have it in the car when the car was towed in and impounded.

I could mail it to myself but I had been getting my mail lately from general delivery at the G.P.O., while shifting from hotel to hotel as often as they found out I was keeping a cat.

I had better mail it to someone I could trust.

But that was a mighty short-list.

Then I remembered someone I could trust.

Ricky.

I may seem a glutton for punishment to decide to trust one female just after I had been clipped by another. But the cases are not parallel. I had known Ricky half her life and if there ever was a human being honest as a Jo block, Ricky was she . . . and Pete thought so, too. Besides, Ricky didn't have physical specifications capable of warping a man's judgment. Her femininity was only in her face; it hadn't affected her figure yet.

When I managed to escape from the log jam in Sepulveda Tunnel I got off the throughway and found a drugstore; there I bought stamps and a big and a little envelop and some note paper. I wrote to her:

Dear Rikki-tikki-tavi,

I hope to see you soon but until I do, I want you to keep this inside envelope for me. It's a secret, just between you and me.

I stopped and thought. Doggone it, if anything happened to me . . . oh, even a car crash, or anything that can stop breathing . . . while Ricky had this, eventually it would wind up with Miles and Belle. Unless I rigged things to prevent it. I realized as I thought about it that I had subconsciously reached a decision about the cold-sleep deal; I wasn't going to take it. Sobering up and the lecture the Doc had read me had stiffened my spine; I wasn't going to run away, I was going to stay and fight—and this stock certificate was my best weapon. It gave me the right to examine the books; it entitled me to poke my nose into any and all affairs of the company. If they tried again simply to keep me out with a hired guard I could go back next time with a lawyer and a deputy sheriff and a court order.

I could drag them into court with it, too. Maybe I couldn't win but I could make a stink and perhaps cause the Mannix people to shy off from buying them out.

Maybe I shouldn't send it to Ricky at all.

No, if anything happened to me I wanted her to have it. Ricky and Pete were all the "family" I had. I went on writing:

If by any chance I don't see you for a year, you'll know something has happened to me. If that happens, take care of Pete, if you can

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

find him—and without telling anybody take the inside envelope to a branch of the Bank of America, give it to the trust officer and tell him to open it.

Love and kisses,
Uncle Danny

Then I took another sheet and wrote:

December 3, 1970, Los Angeles, California.

For one dollar in hand received and other valuable considerations I assign [Here I listed legal descriptions and serial numbers of my Hired Girl, Inc., stock shares.] *to the Bank of America in trust for Frederica Virginia Gentry and to be reassigned to her on her twenty-first birthday,*

and signed it. The intent was clear and it was the best I could do on a drugstore counter with a juke box blaring in my ear. It should make sure that Ricky got the stock if anything happened to me while making darn sure that Miles and Belle could not grab it away from her.

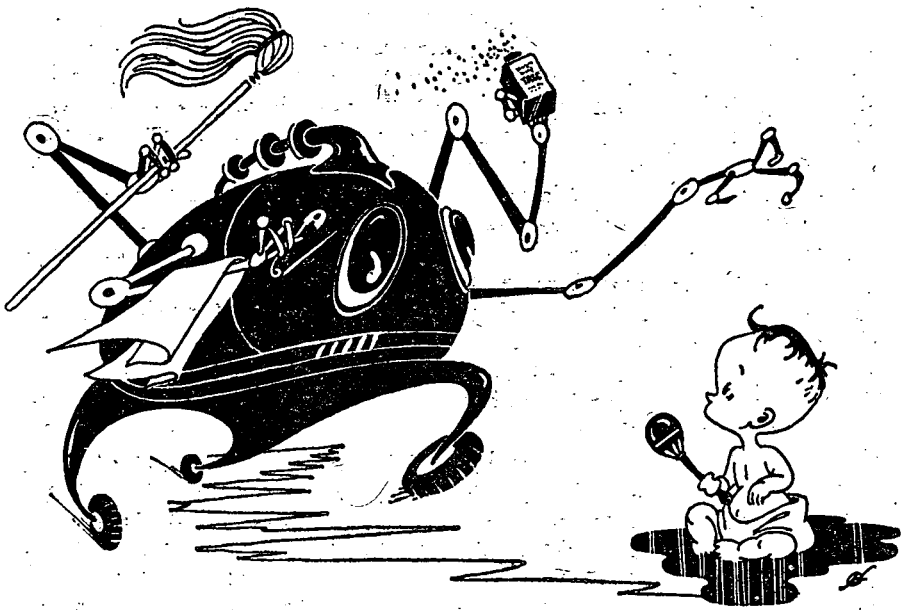
But if all went well, I would just ask Ricky to give the envelope back to me when I got around to it. By not using the assignment form printed on the back of the certificate I avoided all the red tape of having a minor assign it back to me; I could just tear up the separate sheet of paper.

I sealed the stock certificate with the note assigning it into the smaller envelope, placed it and the letter to Ricky in the larger envelope, addressed it to Ricky at the Girl Scout camp, stamped it, and dropped it in the box outside the drugstore. I noted that it would be picked up in about forty minutes and climbed back into my car feeling positively lighthearted . . . not because I had safeguarded the stock but because I had solved my greater problems.

Well, not "solved" them, perhaps, but decided to face them, not run off and crawl in a hole to play Rip van Winkle . . . nor try to blot them out again with ethanol in various flavors. Sure, I wanted to see the year 2000, but just by sitting tight I *would* see it . . . when I was 60, and still young enough, probably, to whistle at the girls. No hurry. Jumping to the next century in one long nap wouldn't be satisfactory to a normal man anyhow—about like seeing the end of a movie without having seen what goes before. The thing to do with the next 30 years was to enjoy them while they unfolded; then when I came to the year 2000 I would understand it.

In the meantime I was going to have one lulu of a fight with Miles and Belle. Maybe I wouldn't win but I would sure let them know they had been in a scrap—like the times Pete had come home bleeding in six directions but insisting loudly, "You ought to see the other cat!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



I didn't expect much out of this interview tonight. All it would amount to was a formal declaration of war. I planned to ruin Miles's sleep . . . and he could phone Belle and ruin hers.

III

By the time I got to Miles's house I was whistling. I had quit worrying about that precious pair and had worked out in my head, in the last fifteen miles, two brand-new gadgets, either one of which could make me rich. One was a drafting machine, to be operated like an electric typewriter. I guessed that there must be easily 50,000 engineers in the U.S. alone bending over drafting boards every day, and hating it, because it gets you in your kidneys and ruins your eyes. Not that they didn't want to design—they did want to—but physically it was too hard.

This gismo would let them sit down in a big easy chair and tap keys and have the picture unfold on an easel above the keyboard. Depress three keys simultaneously and have a horizontal line appear just where you want it; depress another key and you filled it in with a vertical line; depress two keys and then two more in succession and draw a line at an exact slant.

Cripes, for a small additional cost as an accessory, I could add a second easel, let an architect design

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in isometric (the only easy way to design) and have the second picture come out in perfect perspective rendering without his even looking at it. Why, I could even set the thing to pull floor plans and elevations right out of the isometric.

The beauty of it was that it could be made almost entirely with standard parts, most of them available at radio shops and camera stores. All but the control board, that is, and I was sure I could breadboard a rig for that by buying an electric typewriter, tearing its guts out, and hooking the keys to operate these other circuits. A month to make a primitive model, six weeks more to chase bugs . . .

But that one I just tucked away in the back of my mind, certain that I could do it and that it would have a market. The thing that really delighted me was that I had figured out a way to out-flex poor old Flexible Frank. I knew more about Frank than anyone else could learn, even if they studied him a year. What they could not know, what even my notes did not show, was that there was at least one workable alternative for every choice I had made—and that my choices had been constrained by thinking of him as a household servant. To start with I could throw away the restriction that he had to live in a powered wheelchair. From there on I could do anything, except that I would need the Thorsen memory tubes—and Miles could not keep me from using those; they were on the market for anyone who wanted to design a cybernetic sequence.

The drafting machine could wait; I'd get busy on the unlimited, all-purpose automaton, capable of being programed for *anything* a man could do, just as long as it did not require true human judgment.

No, I'd rig a drafting machine first, then use it to design Protean Pete. "How about that, Pete? We're going to name the world's first real robot after you."

"Mrrrrarr?"

"Don't be so suspicious; it's an honor." After breaking in on Frank, I could design Pete right at my drafting machine, really refine it and quickly. I'd make it a killer, a triple-threat demon that would displace Frank before they ever got him into production. With any luck I'd run them broke and have them begging me to come back. Kill the goose that lays the golden eggs, would they?

There were lights on in Miles's house and his car was at the curb. I parked in front of Miles's car, said to Pete, "You'd better stay here, fellow, and protect the car. Holler halt three times fast, then shoot to kill."

"Noo!"

"If you go inside, you'll have to stay in the bag."

"Bleerrrt?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Don't argue. If you want to come in, get in your bag."

Pete jumped into the bag.

Miles let me in. Neither of us offered to shake hands. He led me into his living room and gestured at a chair.

Belle was there. I had not expected her but I suppose it was not surprising. I looked at her and grinned. "Fancy meeting you here! Don't tell me you came all the way from Mojave just to talk to little old me?" Oh, I'm a gallus-snapper when I get started; you should see me wear women's hats at parties.

Belle frowned. "Don't be funny, Dan. Say what you have to say, if anything, and get out."

"Don't hurry me. I think this is cozy . . . my former partner . . . my former fiancee. All we lack is my former business."

Miles said placatingly, "Now, Dan, don't take that attitude. We did it for your own good . . . and you can come back to work any time you want to. I'd be glad to have you back."

"For my own good, eh? That sounds like what they told the horse thief when they hanged him. As for coming back— How about it, Belle? Can I come back?"

She bit her lip. "If Miles says so, of course."

"It seems like only yesterday that it used to be: 'If Dan says so, of course.' But everything changes; that's life. And I'm not coming back, kids; you can stop fretting. I just came here tonight to find out some things."

Miles glanced at Belle. She answered, "Such as?"

"Well, first, which one of you cooked up the swindle? Or did you plan it together?"

Miles said slowly, "That's an ugly word, Dan. I don't like it."

"Oh, come, come, let's not be mealy-mouthed. If the word is ugly, the deed is ten times as ugly. I mean faking a yellow-dog contract, faking patent assignments—that one is a federal offense, Miles; I think they pipe sunlight to you on alternate Wednesdays. I'm not sure, but no doubt the FBI can tell me. Tomorrow," I added, seeing him flinch.

"Dan, you're not going to be silly enough to try to make trouble about this?"

"Trouble? I'm going to hit you in all directions, civil and criminal, on all counts. You'll be too busy to scratch . . . unless you agree to do one thing. But I didn't mention your third peccadillo—theft of my notes and drawings of Flexible Frank . . . and the working model, too, although you may be able to make me pay for the materials for that, since I did bill them to the company."

"Theft, nonsense!" snapped Belle. "You were working for the company."

"Was I? I did most of it at night. And I never was an employee,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Belle, as you both know. I simply drew living expenses against profits earned by my shares. What is the Mannix outfit going to say when I file a criminal complaint, charging that the things they were interested in buying—Hired Girl, Willie, and Frank—never did belong to the company but were stolen from me?"

"Nonsense," Belle repeated grimly. "You were working for the company. You had a contract."

I leaned back and laughed. "Look, kids, you don't have to lie now; save it for the witness stand. There ain't nobody here but just us chickens. What I really want to know is this: who thought it up? I know how it was done. Belle, you used to bring in papers for me to sign. If more than one copy had to be signed, you would paperclip the other copies to the first—for my convenience, of course; you were always the perfect secretary—and all I would see of the copies underneath would be the place to sign my name. Now I know that you slipped some jokers into some of those neat piles. So I know that you were the one who conducted the mechanics of the swindle; Miles could not have done it. Shucks, Miles can't even type very well. But who worded those documents you horsed me into signing? You? I don't think so . . . unless you've had legal training you never mentioned. How about it, Miles? Could a mere stenographer phrase that wonderful clause seven so perfectly? Or did it take a lawyer? *You, I mean.*"

Miles's cigar had long since gone out. He took it from his mouth, looked at it, and said carefully, "Dan, old friend, if you think you'll trap us into admissions, you're crazy."

"Oh, come off it; we're alone. You're both guilty either way. I'd like to think that Delilah over there came to you with the whole thing wrapped up, complete, and then tempted you into a moment of weakness. But I know it's not true. Unless Belle is a lawyer herself, you were both in it, accomplices before and after. You wrote the double talk; she typed it and tricked me into signing. Right?"

"Don't answer, Miles!"

"Of course I won't answer," Miles agreed. "He may have a recorder hidden in that bag."

"I should have had," I agreed, "but I don't." I spread the top of the bag and Pete stuck his head out. "You getting it all, Pete? Careful what you say, folks; Pete has an elephant's memory. No, I didn't bring a recorder—I'm just good old lunkheaded Dan Davis who never thinks ahead. I go stumbling along, trusting my friends . . . the way I trusted you two. Is Belle a lawyer, Miles? Or did you yourself sit down in cold blood and plan how you could hogtie me and rob me and make it look legal?"

"Miles!" interrupted Belle. "With

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his skill, he could make a recorder the size of a pack of cigarettes. It may not be in the bag. It may be on him."

"That's a good idea, Belle. Next time I'll have one."

"I'm aware of that, my dear," Miles answered. "If he has you are talking very loosely. Mind your tongue."

Belle answered with a word I didn't know she used. My eyebrows went up. "Snapping at each other? Trouble between thieves already?"

Miles's temper was stretching thin, I was happy to see. He answered, "Mind *your* tongue, Dan . . . if you want to stay healthy."

"Tsk, tsk! I'm younger than you are and I've had the judo course a lot more recently. And you wouldn't shoot a man; you'd frame him with some sort of fake legal document. 'Thieves' I said and 'thieves' I meant. Thieves and liars, both of you." I turned to Belle. "My old man taught me never to call a lady a liar, sugar face, but you aren't a lady. You're a liar . . . and a thief . . . and a tramp."

Belle turned red and gave me a look in which all her beauty vanished and the underlying predatory animal was all that remained. "Miles!" she said shrilly, "are you going to sit there and let him—"

"Quiet!" Miles ordered. "His rudeness is calculated. It's intended to make us get excited and say things we'll regret. Which you are almost reaching. So keep quiet." Belle shut up, but her face was still feral. Miles turned to me, "Dan, I'm a practical man always, I hope. I tried to make you see reason before you walked out of the firm. In the settlement I tried to make it such that you would take the inevitable gracefully."

"Be raped quietly, you mean."

"As you will. I still want a peaceful settlement. You couldn't win any sort of suit, but as a lawyer I know that it is always better to stay out of court than to win. If possible. You mentioned a while ago that there was some one thing I could do that would placate you. Tell me what it is; perhaps we can reach terms."

"Oh, that. I was coming to it. *You* can't do it but, perhaps you can arrange it. It's simple. Get Belle to assign back to me the stock I assigned to her as an engagement present."

"No!" said Belle.

Miles said, "I told you to keep quiet."

I looked at her and said, "Why not, my former dear? I've taken advice on this point, as the lawyers put it, and, since it was given in consideration of the fact that you promised to marry me, you are not morally but legally bound to return it. It was not a 'free gift' as I believe the expression is, but something handed over for an expected and contracted consideration which I never received, to wit,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

your somewhat lovely self. So how about coughing up, huh? Or have you changed your mind again and are now willing to marry me?"

She told me where and how I could expect to marry her.

Miles said tiredly, "Belle, you're only making things worse. Don't you understand that he is trying to get our goats?" He turned back to me. "Dan, if that is what you came over for, you may as well leave. I stipulate that if the circumstances had been as you alleged, you might have a point. But they were not. You transferred that stock to Belle for value received."

"Huh? What value? Where's the canceled check?"

"There didn't need be any. For services to the company beyond her duties."

I stared. "What a lovely theory! Look, Miles old boy, if it was for service to the company and not to me personally, then you must have known about it and would have been anxious to pay her the same amount—after all, we split the profits fifty-fifty even if I had . . . or thought I had . . . retained control. Don't tell me you gave Belle a block of stock of the same size?"

Then I saw them glance at each other and I got a wild hunch. "Maybe you did! I'll bet my little dumpling made you do it, or she wouldn't play. Is that right? If so, you can bet your life she registered the transfer at once . . . and the dates will show that *I* transferred stock to her at the very time we got engaged—shucks, the engagement was in the *Desert Herald*—while *you* transferred stock to her when you put the skids under me and she jilted me—and it's all a matter of record! Maybe a judge *will* believe me, Miles? What do you think?"

I had cracked them, I had cracked them! I could tell from the way their faces went blank that I had stumbled on the one circumstance they could never explain and one I was never meant to know. So I crowded them . . . and had another wild guess. Wild? No, logical. "How much stock, Belle? As much as you got out of me, just for being 'engaged?' You did more for him; you should have gotten more." I stopped suddenly. "Say . . . I thought it was odd that Belle came all the way over here, just to talk to me, seeing how she hates that trip. Maybe you didn't come all that way; maybe you were here all along. Are you two shacked up? Or should I say 'engaged?' Or . . . are you already married?" I thought about it. "I'll bet you are. Miles, you aren't as starry-eyed as I am; I'll bet my other shirt that you would never, never transfer stock to Belle simply on promise of marriage. But you might for a wedding present—provided you got back voting control of it. Don't bother to answer; tomorrow I'm going to start digging

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for the facts. They'll be on record, too."

Miles glanced at Belle and said, "Don't waste your time. Meet Mrs. Gentry."

"So? Congratulations, both of you. You deserve each other. Now about my stock. Since Mrs. Gentry obviously can't marry me, then—"

"Don't be silly, Dan. I've already offset your ridiculous theory. I did make a stock transfer to Belle, just as you did. For the same reason, services to the firm. As you say, these things are matters of record. Belle and I were married just a week ago . . . but you will find the stock registered to her quite some time ago, if you care to look it up. You can't connect them. No, she received stock from both of us, because of her great value to the firm. Then after you jilted her and after you left the employ of the firm, we were married."

It set me back. Miles was too smart to tell a lie I could check on so easily. But there was something about it that was not true, something more than I had as yet found out.

"When and where were you married?"

"Santa Barbara court house, last Thursday. Not that it is your business."

"Perhaps not. When was the stock transfer?"

"I don't know exactly. Look it up if you want to know."

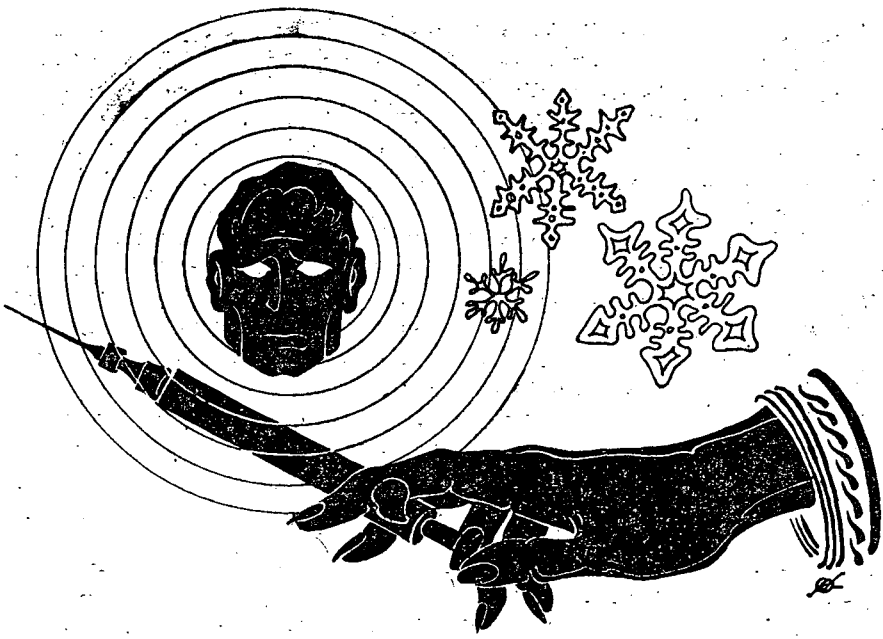
Damn it, it just did not ring true that he had handed stock over to Belle before he had her committed to him. That was the sort of sloppy stunt I pulled; it wasn't in character for him. "I'm wondering something, Miles. If I put a detective to work on it, might I find that the two of you got married once before a little earlier than that? Maybe in Yuma? Or Las Vegas? Or maybe you ducked over to Reno that time you both went north for the tax hearings? Maybe it would turn out that there was such a marriage recorded, and maybe the date of the stock transfer and the dates my patents were assigned to the firm all made a pretty pattern. Huh?"

Miles did not crack; he did not even look at Belle. As for Belle, the hate in her face could not have been increased even by a lucky stab in the dark. Yet it seemed to fit and I decided to ride the hunch to the limit.

Miles simply said, "Dan, I've been patient with you and have tried to be conciliatory. All it's got me is abuse. So I think it's time you left. Or I'll bloody well make a stab at throwing you out—you and your flea-bitten cat!"

"Olé!" I answered. "That's the first manly thing you've said tonight. But don't call Pete 'flea-bitten.' He understands English and he is likely to take a chunk out of you. OK, ex-pal, I'll get out . . . but I want to make a short curtain

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



speech, very short. It's probably the last word I'll ever have to say to you. OK?"

"Well . . . OK. Make it short."

Belle said urgently, "Miles, I want to talk to you."

He motioned her to be quiet without looking at her. "Go ahead. Be brief."

I turned to Belle. "You probably won't want to hear this, Belle. I suggest that you leave."

She stayed, of course. I wanted to be sure she would. I looked back at him. "Miles, I'm not too angry with you. The things a man will do for a larcenous woman are beyond belief. If Samson and Mark Antony were vulnerable why should I expect you to be immune? By rights, instead of being angry, I should be grateful to you. I guess I am, a little. I do know I'm sorry for you." I looked over at Belle. "You've got her now and she's all your problem . . . and all it has cost me is a little money and temporarily my peace of mind. But what will she cost *you?* She cheated me, she even managed to persuade you, my trusted friend, to cheat me . . . what day will she team up with a new cat's-paw and start cheating you? Next week? Next month? As long as next year? As surely as a dog returns to its vomit—"

Miles said dangerously, "Get out!" and I knew he meant it.

"We were just going. I'm sorry

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for you, old fellow. Both of us made just one mistake, originally, and it was as much my fault as yours. But you've got to pay for it alone. And that's too bad . . . because it was such an innocent mistake."

His curiosity got him. "What do you mean?"

"We should have wondered why a woman so smart and beautiful and competent and all-around high-powered was willing to come to work for us at clerk-typist's wages. If we had taken her fingerprints, the way the big firms do, and run a routine check, we might not have hired her . . . and you and I would still be partners."

Pay dirt again! Miles looked suddenly at his wife and she looked—well, "cornered rat" is wrong; rats aren't shaped like Belle.

And I couldn't leave well enough alone; I just had to pick at it. I walked toward her, saying, "Well, Belle? If I took that highball glass sitting beside you and had the finger prints on it checked, what would I find? Pictures in post offices? The big con? Or bigamy? Marrying suckers for their money, maybe? Is Miles legally your husband?" I reached down and picked up the glass.

Belle slapped it out of my hand.

And Miles shouted at me.

And I had finally pushed my luck too far. I had been stupid to go into a cage of dangerous animals with no weapons. Then I forgot the first tenet of the animal tamer: I turned my back. Miles shouted and I turned toward him. Belle grabbed for her purse . . . and I remember thinking that it was a hell of a time for her to be reaching for a cigarette.

Then I felt the stab of the needle.

I remember feeling just one thing as my knees got weak and I started slipping toward the carpet: utter astonishment that Belle would do such a thing to me. When it came right down to it, I still trusted her.

IV

I never was completely unconscious. I got dizzy and vague as the drug hit me—it hits even quicker than morphine. But that was all. Miles yelled something at Belle and grabbed me around the chest as my knees folded. As he dragged me over and let me collapse into a chair, even the dizziness passed.

But, while I was awake, part of me was dead. I know now what they used on me: the "zombie" drug, Uncle Sam's answer to brainwashing. So far as I know, we never used it on a prisoner, but the boys whipped it up in the investigation of brainwashing and there it was, illegal but very effective. It's the same stuff they now use in one-day psychoanalysis, but I believe it takes a court order to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

permit even a psychiatrist to use it.

God knows where Belle laid hands on it. But then God alone knows what other suckers she had on the string.

But I wasn't wondering about that then; I wasn't wondering about anything. I just lay slumped there, passive as a vegetable, hearing what went on, seeing anything in front of my eyes—but if Lady Godiva had strolled through without her horse I would not have shifted my eyes as she passed out of my vision.

Unless I was told to.

Pete jumped out of his bag, trotted over to where I slouched and asked what was wrong. When I didn't answer he started stropping my shins vigorously back and forth, while still demanding an explanation. When still I did not respond, he levitated to my knees, put his forepaws on my chest, looked me right in the face and demanded to know what was wrong, right now and no nonsense.

I didn't answer and he began to wail.

That caused Miles and Belle to pay attention to him. Once Miles had me in the chair he had turned to Belle and had said bitterly, "Now you've done it! Have you gone crazy?"

Belle answered, "Keep your nerve, chubby. We're going to settle him once and for all."

"What? If you think I'm going to help in a *murder*—"

"Stuff it! That would be the logical thing to do . . . but you don't have the guts for it. Fortunately it's not necessary with that stuff in him."

"What do you mean?"

"He's our boy now. He'll do what I tell him to. He won't make any more trouble."

"But . . . good God, Belle, you can't keep him doped up forever."

"Quit talking like a lawyer. I know what this stuff will do; you don't. When he comes out of it he'll do whatever I've told him to do. I'll tell him never to sue us; he'll never sue us. I tell him to quit sticking his nose into our business; OK, he'll leave us alone. I tell him to go to Timbuctu; he'll go there. I tell him to forget all this; he'll forget . . . but he'll do it just the same."

I listened, understanding her but not in the least interested. If somebody had shouted, "The house is on fire!" I would have understood that, too, and I still would not have been interested.

"I don't believe it."

"You don't, eh?" She looked at him oddly. "You ought to."

"Huh? What do you mean?"

"Skip it, skip it. This stuff works, chubby. But first we've got to—"

It was then that Pete started wailing. You don't hear a cat wail very often; you could go a lifetime and not hear it. They don't do it when fighting, no matter how

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

badly they are hurt; they never do it out of simple displeasure. A cat does it only in ultimate distress, when the situation is utterly unbearable but beyond its capacity and there is nothing left to do but keen.

It puts one in mind of a banshee. Also it is hardly to be endured; it hits a nerve-wracking frequency.

Miles turned and said, "That confounded cat! We've got to get it out of here."

Belle said, "Kill it."

"Huh? You're always too drastic, Belle. Why, Dan would raise more Cain about that worthless animal than he would if we had stripped him completely. Here—" He turned and picked up Pete's travel bag.

"I'll kill it!" Belle said savagely. "I've wanted to kill that damned cat for months." She looked around for a weapon, and found one, a poker from the fireplace set; she ran over and grabbed it.

Miles picked up Pete and tried to put him into the bag.

"Tried" is the word. Pete isn't anxious to be picked up by anyone but me or Ricky, and even I would not pick him up while he was wailing without very careful negotiation; an emotionally disturbed cat is as touchy as mercury fulminate. But even if he were not upset Pete certainly would never permit himself without protest to be picked up by the scruff of the neck.

Pete got him with claws in the forearm and teeth in the fleshy part of Miles's left thumb. Miles yelped and dropped him.

Belle shrilled, "Stand clear, chubby!" and swung at him with the poker.

Belle's intentions were sufficiently forthright and she had the strength and the weapon. But she wasn't skilled with her weapon whereas Pete is very skilled with his. He ducked under that roundhouse swipe and hit her four ways, two paws for each of her legs.

Belle screamed and dropped the poker.

I didn't see much of the rest of it. I was still looking straight ahead and could see most of the living room, but I couldn't see anything outside that angle because no one told me to look in any other direction. So I followed the rest of it mostly by sound, except once when they doubled back across my cone of vision, two people chasing a cat—then with unbelievable suddenness, two people being chased by a cat. Aside from that one short scene, I was aware of the battle by the sounds of crashes, running, shouts, curses, and screams.

But I don't think they ever laid a glove on him.

The worst thing that happened to me that night was that, in Pete's finest hour, his greatest battle and greatest victory, I not only did not see all the details, but I was totally unable to appreciate any of it. I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

saw and I heard but I had no feeling about it; at his supreme Moment of Truth I was numb.

I recall it now and conjure up emotion I could not feel then. But it's not the same thing; I'm forever deprived, like a narcolept on a honeymoon.

The crashes and curses ceased abruptly and shortly Miles and Belle came back into the living room. Belle said between gasps, "Who left that censorable screen door unhooked?"

"You did. Shut up about it. It's gone now." Miles had blood on his face as well as his hands; he dabbed at the fresh scratches on his face and did them no good. At some point he must have tripped and gone down, for his clothes looked it and his coat was split up the back.

"I will like hell shut up. Have you got a gun in the house?"

"Huh?"

"I'm going to shoot that damned cat." Belle was in even worse shape than Miles; she had more skin where Pete could get at it—legs, bare arms and shoulders. It was clear that she would not be wearing strapless dresses again soon and unless she got expert attention promptly she was likely to have scars. She looked like a harpy after a row with her sisters.

Miles said, "Sit down!"

She answered him briefly and, by implication, negatively. "I'm going to kill that cat."

"Then don't sit down. Go wash yourself. I'll help you with iodine and stuff and you can help me. But forget that cat; we're well rid of it."

Belle answered rather incoherently but Miles understood her. "You, too," he answered, "in spades. Look here, Belle, if I did have a gun—I'm not saying that I have—and you went out there and started shooting, whether you got the cat or not you would have the police here inside of ten minutes, snooping around and asking questions. Do you want *that* with *him* on our hands?" He jerked a thumb in my direction. "And if you go outside the house tonight without a gun that beast will probably kill you." He scowled even more deeply. "There ought to be a law against keeping an animal like that. He's a public danger. Listen to him."

We could all hear Pete prowling around the house. He was not wailing now; he was voicing his war cry—inviting them to choose weapons and come outside, singly or in bunches.

Belle listened to it and shuddered. Miles said, "Don't worry; he can't get in. I not only hooked the screen you left open, I locked the door."

"Have it your own way." Miles went around checking the window fastenings. Presently Belle left the room and so did he. Some time while they were gone Pete shut

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up. I don't know how long they were gone; time didn't mean anything to me.

Belle came back first. Her makeup and hairdo were perfect; she had put on a long-sleeved, high-necked dress and had replaced the ruined stockings. Except for Band-Aid strips on her face the results of battle did not show. Had it not been for the grim look on her phiz I would have considered her, under other circumstances, a delectable sight.

She came straight toward me and told me to stand up, so I did. She went through me quickly and expertly, not forgetting watch pocket, shirt pockets, and the diagonal one on the left inside of the jacket which most suits do not have. The take was not much—my wallet with a small amount of cash, ID cards, driver's license, and such, keys, small change, a nasal inhaler against the smog, minor miscellaneous junk, and the envelope containing the certified check which she herself had bought and had sent to me. She turned it over, read the closed endorsement I had made on it, and looked puzzled.

"What's this, Dan? Buying a slug of insurance?"

"No." I would have told her the rest, but answering the last question asked of me was the best I could do.

She frowned and put it with rest of the contents of my pockets. Then she caught sight of Pete's bag and apparently recalled the flap in it I used for a briefcase, for she picked it up and opened it.

At once she found the quadruplicate sets of the dozen and a half forms I had signed for Mutual Assurance Company. She sat down and started to read them. I stood where she had left me, a tailor's dummy waiting to be put away.

Presently Miles came in wearing bathrobe and slippers and quite a large amount of gauze and adhesive tape. He looked like a fourth-rate middleweight whose manager has let him be outmatched. He was wearing one bandage like a scalp lock, fore and aft on his bald head; Pete must have got to him while he was down.

Belle glanced up, waved him to silence, and indicated the stack of papers she was through with. He sat down and started to read. He caught up with her and finished the last one reading over her shoulder.

She said, "This puts a different complexion on things."

"An understatement. This commitment order is for December 4—that's *tomorrow*. Belle, he's as hot as noon in Mojave; we've got to get him out of here!" He glanced at a clock." They'll be looking for him in the morning."

"Miles, you always get chicken when the pressure is on. This is a break, maybe the best break we could hope for."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"How do you figure?"

"This zombie soup, good as it is, has one shortcoming. Suppose you dose somebody with it and load him up with what you want him to do. OK, so he does it. He carries out your orders; he has to. Know anything about hypnosis?"

"Not much."

"Do you know *anything* but law, chubby? You haven't any curiosity. A post-hypnotic command—which is what this amounts to—may conflict, in fact it's almost certain to conflict, with what the subject really wants to do. Eventually that may land him in the hands of a psychiatrist. If the psychiatrist is any good, he's likely to find out what the trouble is. It is just possible that Dan here might go to one and get unstuck from whatever orders I give him. If he did, he could make plenty of trouble."

"Damn it, you told me this drug was surefire."

"Good God, chubby, you have to take chances with everything in life. That's what makes it fun. Let me think."

After a bit she said, "The simplest thing, and the safest, is to let him go ahead with this sleep jump he is all set to take. He wouldn't be any more out of our hair if he was dead—and we don't have to take any risk. Instead of having to give him a bunch of complicated orders and then praying that he won't come unstuck, all we have to do is order him to go ahead with the cold-sleep, then sober him up and get him out of here . . . or get him out of here and then sober him." She turned to me. "Dan, when are you going to take the Sleep?"

"I'm not."

"Huh? What's all this?" She gestured at the papers from my bag.

"Papers for cold-sleep. Contracts with Mutual Assurance."

"He's nutty," Miles commented.

"Mmm . . . of course he is. I keep forgetting that they can't really think when they're under it. They can hear and talk and answer questions . . . but it has to be just the right questions. They can't think." She came up close and looked me in the eyes. "Dan, I want you to tell me all about this cold-sleep deal. Start at the beginning and tell it all the way through. You've got all the papers here to do it; apparently you signed them just today. Now you say you aren't going to do it. Tell me all about it, because I want to know why you were going to do it and now you say you aren't."

So I told her. Put that way, I could answer. It took a long time to tell as I did just what she said and told it all the way through, in detail.

"So you sat there in that drive-in and decided not to? You decided to come out here and make trouble for us instead?"

"Yes." I was about to go on, tell about the trip out, tell her what

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I had said to Pete and what he had said to me, tell her how I had stopped at a drugstore and taken care of my Hired Girl stock, how I had driven then to Miles's house, how Pete had not wanted to wait in the car, how—

But she did not give me a chance. She said, "You've changed your mind again, Dan. You *want* to take the cold-sleep. You're going to take the cold-sleep. You won't let anything in the world stand in the way of your taking the cold-sleep. Understand me? What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to take the cold-sleep. I want to take . . ." I started to sway. I had been standing like a flag pole for more than an hour, I would guess, without moving any muscle, because no one had told me to. I started collapsing slowly toward her.

She jumped back and said sharply, "Sit down!"

So I sat down.

Belle turned to Miles. "That does it. I'll hammer away at it until I'm sure he can't miss."

Miles looked at the clock. "He said that doctor wanted him there at noon."

"Plenty of time. But we had better drive him there ourselves, just to be—No, damn it!"

"What's the trouble?"

"The time *is* too short. I gave him enough soup for a horse, because I wanted it to hit him fast—before he hit me. By noon he'd be sober enough to convince most people. But not a doctor."

"Maybe it'll just be perfunctory. His physical examination is already here and signed."

"You heard what he said the doctor told him. The doctor's going to check him to see if he's had anything to drink. That means he'll test his reflexes and take his reaction time and peer in his eyes and—oh, all the things we don't want done. The things we don't dare let a doctor do. Miles, it won't work."

"How about the next day? Call 'em up and tell them there has been a slight delay?"

"Shut up and let me think."

Presently she started looking over the papers I had brought with me. Then she left the room, returned immediately with a jeweler's loupe, which she screwed into her right eye like a monocle and proceeded to examine each paper with great care. Miles asked her what she was doing but she brushed his question aside.

Presently she took the loupe out of her eye and said, "Thank goodness they all have to use the same government forms. Chubby, get me the yellow-pages phone book."

"What for?"

"Get it, get it. I want to check the exact phrasing of a firm name—oh, I know what it is but I want to be sure."

Grumbling, Miles fetched it. She thumbed through it, then said,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes, 'Master Insurance Company of California' . . . and there's room enough on each of them. I wish it could be 'Motors' instead of 'Master'; that would be a cinch—but I don't have any connections at Motors Insurance and besides I'm not sure they even handle hibernation; I think they're just autos and trucks." She looked up. "Chubby, you're going to have to drive me out to the plant, right away."

"Huh?"

"Unless you know of some quicker way to get an electric typewriter with executive typeface and carbon ribbon. No, you go out by yourself and fetch it back; I've got telephoning to do."

He frowned. "I'm beginning to see what you plan to do. But, Belle, this is crazy. This is fantastically dangerous."

She laughed. "That's what you think. I told you I had good connections, before we ever teamed up. Could you have swung the Mannix deal alone?"

"Well . . . I don't know."

"*I* know. And maybe you don't know that Master Insurance is part of the Mannix group."

"Well, no, I didn't. And I don't see what difference it makes."

"It means my connections are still good. See here, chubby, the firm I used to work for used to help Mannix Enterprises with their tax losses . . . until my boss left the country. How do you think we got such a good deal, without being able to guarantee that Danny Boy went with the deal? I know all about Mannix. Now hurry up and get that typewriter and I'll let you watch an artist at work. Watch out for that cat."

Miles grumbled but started to leave, then returned. "Belle? Didn't Dan park right in front of the house?"

"Why?"

"His car isn't there now." He looked worried.

"Well, he probably parked around the corner. It's unimportant. Go get that typewriter. Hurry!"

He left again. I could have told them where I had parked, but, since they did not ask me, I did not think about why Miles could not find my car there, right in front of his own. I did not think at all.

Belle went elsewhere in the house and left me alone. Sometime around daylight Miles got back, looking haggard and carrying our heavy typewriter. Then I was left alone again.

Once Belle came back in and said, "Dan, you've got a paper there telling the insurance company to take care of your Hired Girl stock. You don't want to do that; you want to give it to me."

I didn't answer. She looked annoyed and said, "Let's put it this way. You do want to give it to me. You know you want to give it to me. You know that, don't you?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes. I want to give it to you."

"Good. You want to give it to me. You have to give it to me. You won't be happy until you do give it to me. Now where is it? Is it in your car?"

"No."

"Then where is it?"

"I mailed it."

"What?" She grew shrill. "When did you mail it? Who did you mail it to? Why did you do it?"

If she had asked the second question last I would have answered it. But I answered the last question, that being all I could handle. "I assigned it."

Miles came in. "Where did he put it?"

"He says he's mailed it . . . because he has assigned it! You had better find his car and search it—he may just think he actually mailed it. He certainly had it with him at the insurance company."

"Assigned it!" repeated Miles. "Good Lord! To whom?"

"I'll ask him. Dan, to whom did you assign your stock?"

"To the Bank of America." She didn't ask me why, or I would have told her about Ricky.

All she did was slump her shoulders and sigh. "There goes the ball game, chubby. We can forget about the stock. It'll take more than a nail file to get it away from a bank." She straightened up suddenly. "Unless he hasn't really mailed it yet. If he hasn't, I'll clean that assignment off the back so pretty you'll think it's been to the laundry. Then he'll assign it again . . . to me."

"To us," corrected Miles.

"That's just a detail. Go find his car."

Miles returned later and announced, "It's not anywhere within six blocks of here. I cruised around all the streets, and the alleys, too. He must have used a cab."

"You heard him say he drove his own car."

"Well, it's not out there. Ask him when and where he mailed the stock."

So Belle did and I told them. "Just before I came here. I mailed it at the postbox at the corner of Sepulveda and Ventura."

"Do you suppose he's lying?" asked Miles.

"He can't lie, not in the shape he's in. And he's too definite about it to be mixed up. Forget it, Miles. Maybe after he's put away it will turn out that his assignment is no good because he had already sold it to us . . . at least I'll get his signature on some blanksheets and be ready to try it."

She did try to get my signature and I tried to oblige. But in the shape I was in I could not write well enough to satisfy her. Finally she snatched a sheet out of my hand and said viciously, "You make me sick! I can sign your name better than that." Then she leaned over me and said tensely, "I wish I had killed your cat."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They did not bother me again until later in the day. Then Belle came in and said, "Danny Boy, I'm going to give you a hypo and then you'll feel a lot better. You'll feel able to get up and move around and act just like you always have acted. You won't be angry at anybody, especially not at Miles and me. We're your best friends. We are, aren't we? Who are your best friends?"

"You are. You and Miles."

"But I'm more than that. I'm your sister. Say it."

"You're my sister."

"Good. Now we're going for a ride and then you are going for a long sleep. You've been sick and when you wake up you'll be well. Understand me?"

"Yes."

"Who am I?"

"You're my best friend. You're my sister."

"Good boy. Push your sleeve back."

I didn't feel the hypo go in, but it stung after she pulled it out. I sat up and shrugged and said, "Gee, Sis, that stung. What was it?"

"Something to make you feel better. You've been sick."

"Yeah, I'm sick. Where's Miles?"

"He'll be here in a moment. Now let's have your other arm."

I said, "What for?" but I pushed back the sleeve and let her shoot me again. I jumped.

She smiled. "That didn't really hurt, did it?"

"Huh? No, it didn't hurt. What's it for?"

"It will make you sleepy, on the ride. Then when we get there you'll wake up."

"OK. I'd like to sleep. I want to take a long sleep." Then I felt puzzled and looked around. "Where's Pete? Pete was going to sleep with me."

"Pete?" Belle said. "Why, dear, don't you remember? You sent Pete to stay with Ricky. She's going to take care of him."

"Oh, yes!" I grinned with relief. I had sent Pete to Ricky; I remembered mailing him. That was good. Ricky loved Pete and she would take good care of him while I was asleep.

They drove me out to the Consolidated Sanctuary at Sawtelle, one that many of the smaller insurance companies used—those that didn't have their own. I slept all the way but came awake at once when Belle spoke to me. Miles stayed in his car and she took me in. The girl at the desk looked up and said, "Davis?"

"Yes," agreed Belle. "I'm his sister. Is the representative for Master Insurance here?"

"You'll find him down in Treatment Room Nine—they're ready and waiting. You can give the papers to the man from Master." She looked at me with interest. "He's had his physical examination?"

"Oh, yes!" Belle assured her. "Brother is a therapy-delay case,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you know. He's under an opiate . . . for the pain."

The receptionist clucked sympathetically. "Well, hurry on in then. Through that door and turn left."

In room nine there was a man in street clothes and one in white coveralls and a woman in a nurse's uniform. They helped me get undressed and treated me like an idiot child, while Belle explained again that I was under a sedative for the pain. Once he had me stripped and up on the table the man in white massaged my belly, digging his fingers in deeply. "No trouble with this one," he announced. "He's empty."

"He hasn't had anything to eat or drink since yesterday evening," agreed Belle.

"That's fine. Sometimes they come in here stuffed like a Christmas turkey. Some people have no sense."

"True. Very true."

"Uh huh. Okay, son, clench your fist tight while I get this needle in."

I did and things began to get really hazy. Suddenly I remembered something and tried to sit up. "Where's Pete? I want to see Pete."

Belle took my head and kissed me. "There, there, Buddy! Pete couldn't come, remember? Pete had to stay with Ricky." I quieted down and she said gently to the others, "Our brother Peter has a sick little girl at home."

I dropped off to sleep.

Presently I felt very cold. But I couldn't move to reach the covers.

(To be continued)

Don't miss next month's F&SF with the exciting second installment, which introduces Dan Davis (and you) to the world of 2000 A.D., described with all the ingenious and convincing detail of which Heinlein is master, confronts him with the problem of living in a civilization in which his own knowledge is hopelessly antiquated, carries him swiftly along on his quest for justice, Ricky and the Door into Summer — and brings in a startling science fiction theme not even hinted at in the story so far.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I Don't Mind

by RON SMITH

YOU PROBABLY THINK IT BOTHERS me, but it doesn't. I've got books and records, plenty to eat and a nice place to lay around and be lazy and soak up a little culture — things I never had before.

Yes sir, I came out of it all right. I'm better off and happier than I ever was. And I'm glad she's here. It would be damned lonely if I didn't have her around to talk to once in awhile. I've never known much loneliness, always had company, and I wouldn't want to know it now. I like talking to women.

But, of course, the only reason she's here is because no one else did come out of it. At least, as far as we know.

Everyone else is . . . well, gone.

So, for the sake of companionship, we got together in this place. We've got everything we need — and we live in the best section of New York, too. At least, what was the best section when there were people around to compare.

Sometimes I get homesick, but it would be such a long trip back — with no easy way of getting there and nothing there anyway. Besides, she doesn't want to leave.

And, as I said, I enjoy her company.

Of course I don't see her much. She does a lot of walking, likes to be alone. But I have my books, a bottle of wine always handy. There's always something to occupy my mind. I enjoy myself. I don't mind at all.

But I do like to sit and talk to her at night about the books we've read and the places she's been. She doesn't like to talk about the places I've been, so I never mention it.

We sometimes have a few drinks while we're talking and I joke with her to keep her spirits up and then we go to bed. She has her own bedroom across the hall. We each have separate bathrooms. It's better that way.

Occasionally, just before she leaves, she looks at me with a strange far-off look in her eyes and starts to say something: "Kafur . . ." and lets it trail off.

I smile and say goodnight and she goes to her room.

But I don't mind at all. Not at all.

Why I remember back in the old days when I was with the Sultan. I used to wander around the harem all the time, and I didn't mind at all.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If there is a magazine whose editor esteems the work of Charles Beaumont even more than I do, it is Playboy. *Beaumont has been appearing regularly in those distracting pages, nestled close to the Playmate of one month after another, and frequently with a science-fantasy story. See* PLAYBOY ANNUAL *(1955) for his* The Crooked Man, *the most controversial story in recent s.f., which you are bound to find highly admirable (as I do) or markedly distasteful — or possibly both. And meanwhile relish this wholly non-controversial spoof on the ultimate possibilities of mass entertainment.*

The Monster Show

by CHARLES BEAUMONT

"IS IT SOCK?" THE BIG MAN INQUIRED nervously, flicking a tablet into his mouth.

"It is sock," the Official Coordinator of TV Production replied. "It is wham and boff. I give you my word."

"I give it back to you. Words mean nothing. It's pictures that count. Flap?"

"Sure; flap, flap," the Official Coordinator said, and slipped a small needle into a large vein. "But I tell you, B. P., there is nothing to worry about. We have got thirty cameras regular and sixty in reserve. For every actor, two stand-ins. In fact, we have even got stand-ins for the stand-ins. Nothing can go wrong. Nothing-O."

The Big Man collapsed into a chair and moved a handkerchief rhythmically across his neck. "I don't know," he said. "I am worried."

"What you should do, B. P.," the Official Coordinator said, "is, you should relax."

The Big Man belched a picture off the wall. "Relax!" he shouted. "The most expensive TV production in history and he tells me to relax!"

"B. P., flap this. Everything is scatty-boo, A through Z. We absotively and posilutely cannot miss."

"I just don't know," the Big Man said, shaking his head.

The Official Coordinator removed a red pellet from an onyx case and tossed it into his mouth. "Boss, listen to me for a double-mo.

From Playboy: © 1956 by H. M. H. Publishing Co., Inc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Listen. Close the eyes. Now: You are no longer the Chief and Commander of Production of the World's Largest TV Studio—"

The Big Man trembled slightly.

"You are, instead, Mr. Average World Family in 1976 A. D. Flap?"

"Flap, flap."

"Kay. You are sitting in front of your two-thirds-paid-for 150-inch non-curved wall T-Viewer. You are in your undershirt. The missus has poured you a beer and you are munching Cheese Drackles. Reety-O. Suddenly you see that it is two minutes to eight. You jab the autoray and switch channels right away, if you are sucker enough to be on another channel, which, thanks to those lousy feebs at OBC, maybe you are. But not for long! Because for six months you have been hearing about it. The biggest, the greatest, the most spectacular, the *most expensive* production ever to hit the screen. Said I biggest? Said I greatest? Said I most spectacular? Father-O, this is a veritybobble *monster* of a show! So what do we call it? Natcheroony: *The Monster Show!* 'EVERYBODY WILL BE WATCHING IT—WILL YOU?' These words, Mr. Average World Family, are stamped into your brain. You've seen them everywhere: billboards, leaflets, sky-writing, magazine ads, the regular 15-minute daily commersh; and you've *heard* them everywhere, too: in buses and planes and cars, from your children—"

"Meant to tell you," the Big Man interrupted, "getting at the children was a good move."

"What about the parrots?"

"The parrots was also a good move."

"I blush, B. P. But hearken-O: There you are. Are you there?"

"Proceed on. I am ears."

"Kay. It is one minute to eight. You are shaking with excitement. Just like all the rest of the Folks everywhere else. In the bars, in the theatres, in the homes. Some with 90-foot curvo screens, some with modest 40-inchers, some even—like the cops and all—with nothing but their wrist-peeps. Get the image, B. P. All over the world, everything stopped, everybody staring at their sets, waiting, waiting . . ."

"What about the competition?"

The Official Coordinator stuck his hands in his pockets and did a sort of dance. "B. P., Uncle-O—there isn't any!" He grinned widely. "And *that* is my surprise."

The Big Man opened his eyes. He clutched the arms of the chair. "How's that, how's that?"

"You tell me no stories, I'll tell you no untruths," the Official Coordinator smirked. "Baby, they have scratched themselves. Us they do not choose to buck. They are offering to the folks in place of their usual maloop a kitty of our own show—which I got a hefty slap for which, Mother-O . . ."

"Now, now," said the Big Man, smiling slyly, "you did not muscle the OBC boys a little, I hope?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Truth-O, Uncle. Nay. They plain quit. The eight spot is *ours!*" The Official Coordinator slapped his hands together. "And who's to blame them? What *The Monster Show* has not got you can mount on the sharp end of an isotope. Flap this: We begin with a two-hour commercial round-up, advertising the products of our 57 sponsors: General Turbines, Sleep-Neat Capsules, Chewey-Flakes, the Komfy-Kool TV Furniture line and ek-cetera. But are these ordinary commershes? Noo. We have them tricked out so they look prez-actly like the show. Excavate?"

"Yo."

"Kay. Then: into the show. And *what* a show! I ask you, Mr. Average World Family, at night when you're all blasted out and ready for the old air-matt do you like to get spooned a lot of maloop you have got to *think* about, or do you like to get *round?*"

The Big Man made a solemn circle with his finger.

"And what is the roundest? Something long and complex and all drawn out? Nay. *Variety:* that's what is the roundest. So we give you a variety show. Starting things off with a kronch, we have a half-hour trained dog act. Then right into fifteen minutes of old Western movie footage, with the middle reel of a British mystery for the capper. Then a full hour of wrestling, male and female. Ears?"

"Ears."

"A mere starteroo, B. P. We punch 'em with twenty minutes of hillbilly-style Used Car commersh, and then we *really* start fighting. A right cross with Rev. Vincent Bell on *How to Live Up to the Hilt;* a left jab with the first installment of a new detergent-opera, *Jill Jackson, Jet-Wife;* an uppercut to the jaw with *Who's Zoo*—keep moving; don't give 'em a chance to think, see—followed by a flurry of lightning blows to the face and body: *Chef Gaston Escargot's School of Cookery! Mike Tometrist, Private Op! A Ten-Year Roundup of Stock Turbo* and *Jaloppy Racing!* A musical remake of the old motion picture *Waterloo Bridge,* now called *London Derrière!*" The Official Coordinator was warming to his topic; his eyes were wide and his lower lip moist. "Do we swing?"

The Big Man nodded. "Speaking as Mr. Average World Family," he said, "I am getting slightly interested. Wing on."

"Well, we got 'em dizzy now, flap? Kay. We ease off with a handcream commersh: you know, the voodoo dance routine? Thirty minutes. Then, quos! Right in the old schwanzola!"

"What do we do, what do we do?" the Big Man asked.

"We let 'em have it. POW!" The Official Coordinator needled a vein ecstatically, and exploded: "The old haymaker. The slamboreeno. *Twenty* of the world's greatest

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

comedians onstage, going through their most famous routines, *all at the same time!*"

There was a pregnant pause.

Then the Big Man shot from his chair, extruded a hirsute hand and laid it gently on the Official Coordinator's shoulder. "One thing," he said, with genuine concern.

"Yes? the Official Coordinator quavered.

"Do we have enough?"

"B. P., I think we do. I really and truly think we do." The Coordinator quickly rolled three pellets into his mouth and grimaced.

"Then," said the Big Man, "I feel that we ought to be mighty proud. And, flap me, mighty humble, too. Because we are giving the world public the thing they want and need most: *Entertainment.*" He winked gravely. "Also, we are making for ourselves a few drachmae. Excavate?"

The Official Coordinator brushed a tear of satisfaction from his cheek. "Boss," he said, in cathedral tones, "I promise you this. This I promise you. *Everybody* on Earth is going to be watching *The Monster Show* tonight. It is going to be an experience no one will forget. In fact, I will far-enough-go to say that it will be the most important moment in history!"

The Big Man squeezed the Coordinator's fleshly digits and smiled. "Screech," he said. "You've done poogoo. Now powder: the mind must rest."

The Coordinator nodded, tugged at his forelock, and exited through the bullet-proof sliding door.

When it was firmly shut, the Big Man went over and locked it; then he removed from his pocket a flat disc with three knobs. He twiddled the knobs.

There was a humming.

"As planned," the Big Man said, and put the triple-knobbed disc back into his pocket.

His face was curiously devoid of expression. There was perhaps a trace of amusement about the mouth-ends as he went to the chromium bar and poured himself a shot of amber; perhaps not. He punched the inter-office audiobox. "Miss Dovecoat," he said, "please flap me good. I will see no one between now and the show. Out?"

"And over," the voice of Miss Dovecoat crackled.

The Big Man sat in the chair, silent and unmoving, for four and a half-hours.

At ten minutes to eight he pressed seventeen levers on his desk and listened to seventeen yessirs.

"Report?" he barked.

"Scatoreeny, sir," came the answer like a celestial choir somewhat off-key.

"Sure?"

"Absotive and posilute."

"Everything moving?"

"With an 'o'. With a 'k'."

"Unbad, gentlemen."

"You snap the whip, we'll take the voyage."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Ears out, now. *Coverage?*"

"One-hundred-percent."

"100% one-hundred-percent?"

"100% one - hundred - per*cent* 100%!"

"Kay. Gentlemen: Proceed on."

The Big Man turned off all the levers and touched a concealed desk button. The three walls of the room seemed to shimmer and reshape themselves into a perfect curve; then they became clear. The image of a man fifty feet tall appeared. He was smiling and pouring a hundred gallons of beer into a gigantic glass.

.." . . . so get those taste buds unlimbered, folksies, and treat yourselves to the world's favorite brew: Rocky Mountain! Yes! That's absotively right! I said Rocky . . ."

Then, the sound of a thousand trumpets, and an aerial shot of 70 hand-picked chorus girls, so arranged as to spell out:

THE
MONSTER
SHOW

The Big Man waited a moment, until the Emcee had come on-stage, then he snapped the concealed button and the walls became walls again.

He removed the triple-knobbed disc. "Now," he said, and slumped into a chair.

Hours passed, but he did not move.

Finally, there was a sharp knock at the bullet-proof sliding door.

The Big Man went to the door and opened it, cautiously. Eight lavender creatures with slimy skin and no noses at all were there.

"Well?" the Big Man said.

One of the creatures, slightly more lavender than the rest, stepped forward. "Extremely well," it said. "In fact, perfectly. The Earth people are all dead. Thanks, Volshak, to you."

"Nonsense," the Big Man said, turning into a lavender creature with slimy skin and no nose at all. "I have had quite enough idolatry. I prefer to think of myself merely as an agent who tried to do his job."

"Volshak, Volshak," the creature hissed, "such modesty! You are a hero. Why, if there had been the slightest resistance, we would have failed. We had few weapons, a bare handful of warriors—frankly, we were very nearly ready to descend into The Great Abyss. But even the gulfs are full of vanquished invaders: we did not have, so to speak, a pit to pass in. But now we may revel in the sunlight and enjoy the blessings of propagation on a new world without having lost a single thrimp." The creature put a boneless tentacle forward. "How did you manage it? Volshak, *how* did you manage to put *all* the Earth people to sleep at the same time?"

But Volshak was blushing. He turned his unproboscidean face to the wall and muttered, in a small, proud voice: "It was easy."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Zenna Henderson is now teaching in France; and coincidentally, her moving chronicles of The People have been appearing in our French edition and causing quite as much sensation there as here by their quality as uniquely sensitive interplanetary tales. There'll be another episode in the history of The People in these pages soon; and in the meantime you'll find the same sensitivity and warmth in this gentle and perceptive story of a classroom, a problem child, and an .

Anything Box

by ZENNA HENDERSON

I SUPPOSE IT WAS ABOUT THE SECOND week of school that I noticed Sue-lynn particularly. Of course, I'd noticed her name before and checked her out automatically for maturity and ability and probable performance the way most teachers do with their students during the first weeks of school. She had checked out mature and capable and no worry as to performance as I had pigeonholed her—setting aside for the moment the little nudge that said, "Too quiet"—with my other no-worrys until the fluster and flurry of the first days had died down a little.

I remember my noticing day. I had collapsed into my chair for a brief respite from guiding hot little hands through the intricacies of keeping a crayola within reasonable bounds and the room was full of the relaxed, happy hum of a pleased class as they worked away, not realizing that they were rubbing "blue" into their memories as well as onto their papers. I was meditating on how individual personalities were beginning to emerge among the 35 or so heterogeneous first graders I had, when I noticed Sue-lynn—really noticed her—for the first time.

She had finished her paper—far ahead of the others as usual—and was sitting at her table facing me. She had her thumbs touching in front of her on the table and her fingers curving as though they held something between them—something large enough to keep her fingertips apart and angular enough to bend her fingers as if for corners. It was something pleasant that she held—pleasant and precious. You could tell that by the softness of her hold. She was leaning forward a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

little, her lower ribs pressed against the table, and she was looking, completely absorbed, at the table between her hands. Her face was relaxed and happy. Her mouth curved in a tender half-smile, and as I watched, her lashes lifted and she looked at me with a warm share-the-pleasure look. Then her eyes blinked and the shutters came down inside them. Her hand flicked into the desk and out. She pressed her thumbs to her forefingers and rubbed them slowly together. Then she laid one hand over the other on the table and looked down at them with the air of complete denial and ignorance children can assume so devastatingly.

The incident caught my fancy and I began to notice Sue-lynn. As I consciously watched her, I saw that she spent most of her free time staring at the table between her hands, much too unobtrusively to catch my busy attention. She hurried through even the fun-est of fun papers and then lost herself in looking. When Davie pushed her down at recess, and blood streamed from her knee to her ankle, she took her bandages and her tear-smudged face to that comfort she had so readily—if you'll pardon the expression—at hand, and emerged minutes later, serene and dry-eyed. I think Davie pushed her down because of her Looking. I know the day before he had come up to me, red-faced and squirming.

"Teacher," he blurted. "She Looks!"

"Who looks?" I asked absently, checking the vocabularly list in my book, wondering how on earth I'd missed *where,* one of those annoying *wh* words that throw the children for a loss.

"Sue-lynn. She Looks and Looks!"

"At you?" I asked.

"Well..." He rubbed a forefinger below his nose, leaving a clean streak on his upper lip, accepted the proffered kleenex and put it in his pocket. "She looks at her desk and tells lies. She says she can see..."

"Can see what?" My curiosity picked up its ears.

"Anything," said Davie. "It's her Anything Box. She can see anything she wants to."

"Does it hurt you for her to Look?"

"Well," he squirmed. Then he burst out. "She says she saw me with a dog biting me because I took her pencil—she said." He started a pellmell verbal retreat. "She *thinks* I took her pencil. I only found—" His eyes dropped. "I'll give it back."

"I hope so," I smiled. "If you don't want her to look at you, then don't do things like that."

"Dern girls," he muttered and clomped back to his seat.

So I think he pushed her down the next day to get back at her for the dog-bite.

Several times after that I wandered to the back of the room, casu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ally in her vicinity, but always she either saw or felt me coming and the quick sketch of her hand disposed of the evidence. Only once I thought I caught a glimmer of something—but her thumb and forefinger brushed in sunlight, and it must have been just that.

Children don't retreat for no reason at all, and, though Sue-lynn did not follow any overt pattern of withdrawal, I started to wonder about her. I watched her on the playground, to see how she tracked there. That only confused me more.

She had a very regular pattern. When the avalanche of children first descended at recess, she avalanched along with them and nothing in the shrieking, running, dodging mass resolved itself into a withdrawn Sue-lynn. But after ten minutes or so, she emerged from the crowd, tousle-haired, rosy-cheeked, smutched with dust, one shoelace dangling and, through some alchemy that I coveted for myself, she suddenly became untousled, undusty and unsmutched. And there she was, serene and composed on the narrow little step at the side of the flight of stars just where they disappeared into the base of the pseudo-Corinthian column that graced Our Door and her cupped hands received whatever they received and her absorption in what she saw became so complete that the bell came as a shock every time.

And each time, before she joined the rush to Our Door, her hand would sketch a gesture to her pocket, if she had one, or to the tiny ledge that extended between the hedge and the building. Apparently she always had to put the Anything Box away, but never had to go back to get it.

I was so intrigued by her putting whatever it was on the ledge that once I actually went over and felt along the grimy little outset. I sheepishly followed my children into the hall, wiping the dust from my fingertips, and Sue-lynn's eyes brimmed amusement at me without her mouth's smiling. Her hands mischievously squared in front of her and her thumbs caressed a solidness as the line of children swept into the room.

I smiled too because she was so pleased with having outwitted me. This seemed to be such a gay withdrawal that I let my worry die down. Better this manifestation than any number of other ones that I could name.

Someday, perhaps, I'll learn to keep my mouth shut. I wish I had before that long afternoon when we primary teachers worked together in a heavy cloud of ditto fumes, the acrid smell of India ink, drifting cigarette smoke and the constant current of chatter, and I let Alpha get me started on what to do with our behavior problems. She was all raunched up about the usual rowdy loudness of her boys and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the eternal clack of her girls, and I —bless my stupidity—gave her Sue-lynn as an example of what should be our deepest concern rather than the outbursts from our active ones.

"You mean she just sits and looks at nothing?" Alpha's voice grated into her questioning tone.

"Well, I can't see anything," I admitted. "But apparently she can."

"But that's having hallucinations!" Her voice went up a notch. "I read a book once—"

"Yes." Marlene leaned across the desk to flick ashes in the ashtray. "So we have heard and heard and heard."

"Well!" sniffed Alpha. "It's better than *never* reading a book."

"We're waiting," Marlene leaked smoke from her nostrils, "for the day when you read another book. This one must have been uncommonly long."

"Oh, I don't know." Alpha's forehead wrinkled with concentration. "It was only about—" Then she reddened and turned her face angrily away from Marlene.

"Apropos of *our* discussion—" she said pointedly. "It sounds to me like that child has a deep personality disturbance. Maybe even a psychotic—whatever—" Her eyes glistened faintly as she turned the thought over.

"Oh, I don't know," I said, surprised into echoing her words at my sudden need to defend Sue-lynn. "There's something about her. She doesn't have that apprehensive, hunched-shoulder, don't-hit-me-again air about her that so many withdrawn children have." And I thought achingly of one of mine from last year that Alpha had now and was verbally bludgeoning back into silence after all my work with him. "She seems to have a happy, adjusted personality, only with this odd little . . . *plus*."

"Well, I'd be worried if she were mine," Alpha. "I'm glad all my kids are so normal." She sighed complacently. "I guess I really haven't anything to kick about. I seldom ever have problem children except wigglers and yakkers, and a holler and a smack can straighten them out."

Marlene caught my eye mockingly, tallying Alpha's class with me, and I turned away with a sigh. To be so happy—well, I suppose ignorance does help.

"You'd better do something about that girl," Alpha shrilled as she left the room. "She'll probably get worse and worse as time goes on. Deteriorating, I think the book said."

I had known Alpha a long time and I thought I knew how much of her talk to discount, but I began to worry about Sue-lynn. Maybe this *was* a disturbance that was more fundamental than the usual run-of-the-mill that I had met up with. Maybe a child *can* smile a soft, contented smile and still have little maggots of madness flourishing somewhere inside.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Or, by gorry! I said to myself defiantly, maybe she *does* have an Anything Box. Maybe she *is* looking at something precious. Who am I to say no to anything like that?

An Anything Box! What could you see in an Anything Box? Heart's desire? I felt my own heart lurch—just a little—the next time Sue-lynn's hands curved. I breathed deeply to hold me in my chair. If it was *her* Anything Box, I wouldn't be able to see my heart's desire in it. Or would I? I propped my cheek up on my hand and doodled aimlessly on my time schedule sheet. How on earth, I wondered—not for the first time—do I manage to get myself off on these tangents?

Then I felt a small presence at my elbow and turned to meet Sue-lynn's wide eyes.

"Teacher?" The word was hardly more than a breath.

"Yes?" I could tell that for some reason Sue-lynn was loving me dearly at the moment. Maybe because her group had gone into new books that morning. Maybe because I had noticed her new dress, the ruffles of which made her feel very feminine and lovable, or maybe just because the late autumn sun lay so golden across her desk. Anyway, she was loving me to overflowing, and since, unlike most of the children, she had no casual hugs or easy moist kisses, she was bringing her love to me in her encompassing hands.

"See my box, Teacher? It's my Anything Box."

"Oh, my!" I said. "May I hold it?"

After all, I have held—tenderly or apprehensively or bravely—tiger magic, live rattlesnakes, dragon's teeth, poor little dead butterflies and two ears and a nose that dropped off Sojie one cold morning—none of which I could see any more than I could the Anything Box. But I took the squareness from her carefully, my tenderness showing in my fingers and my face.

And I received weight and substance and actuality!

Almost I let it slip out of my surprised fingers, but Sue-lynn's apprehensive breath helped me catch it and I curved my fingers around the precious warmness and looked down, down, past a faint shimmering, down into Sue-lynn's Anything Box.

I was running barefoot through the whispering grass. The swirl of my skirts caught the daisies as I rounded the gnarled appletree at the corner. The warm wind lay along each of my cheeks and chuckled in my ears. My heart outstripped my flying feet and melted with a rush of delight into warmness as his arms—

I closed my eyes and swallowed hard, my palms tight against the Anything Box. "It's beautiful!" I whispered. "It's wonderful, Sue-lynn. Where did you get it?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Her hands took it back hastily. "It's mine," she said defiantly. "It's mine."

"Of course," I said. "Be careful now. Don't drop it."

She smiled faintly as she sketched a motion to her pocket. "I won't." She patted the flat pocket on her way back to her seat.

Next day she was afraid to look at me at first for fear I might say something or look something or in some way remind her of what must seem like a betrayal to her now, but after I only smiled my usual smile, with no added secret knowledge, she relaxed.

A night or so later when I leaned over my moon-drenched window sill and let the shadow of my hair hide my face from such ebullient glory, I remembered about the Anything Box. Could I make one for myself? Could I square off this aching waiting, this out-reaching, this silent cry inside me, and make it into an Anything Box? I freed my hands and brought them together, thumb to thumb, framing a part of the horizon's darkness between my upright forefingers. I stared into the empty square until my eyes watered. I sighed, and laughed a little, and let my hands frame my face as I leaned out into the night. To have magic so near—to feel it tingle off my fingertips and then to be so bound that I couldn't receive it. I turned away from the window—turning my back on brightness.

It wasn't long after this that Alpha succeeded in putting sharp points of worry back in my thoughts of Sue-lynn. We had ground duty together, and one morning when we shivered while the kids ran themselves rosy in the crisp air, she sizzed in my ear,

"Which one is it? The abnormal one, I mean."

"I don't have any abnormal children," I said, my voice sharpening before the sentence ended because I suddenly realized whom she meant.

"Well, I call it abnormal to stare at nothing." You could almost taste the acid in her words. "Who is it?"

"Sue-lynn," I said reluctantly. "She's playing on the bars now."

Alpha surveyed the upside-down Sue-lynn whose brief skirts were belled down from her bare pink legs and half covered her face as she swung from one of the bars by her knees. Alpha clutched her wizened, blue hands together and breathed on them. "She looks normal enough," she said.

"She *is* normal!" I snapped.

"*Well,* bite my head off!" cried Alpha. "You're the one that said she wasn't, not me—or is it 'not I'? I never could remember. Not me? Not I?"

The bell saved Alpha from a horrible end. I never knew a person so serenely unaware of essentials and so sensitive to trivia.

But she had succeeded in making me worry about Sue-lynn again,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the worry exploded into distress a few days later.

Sue-lynn came to school sleepy-eyed and quiet. She didn't finish any of her work and she fell asleep during rest time. I cussed TV and Drive-Ins and assumed a night's sleep would put it right. But next day Sue-lynn burst into tears and slapped Davie clear off his chair.

"Why Sue-lynn!" I gathered Davie up in all his astonishment and took Sue-lynn's hand. She jerked it away from me and flung herself at Davie again. She got two handfuls of his hair and had him out of my grasp before I knew it. She threw him bodily against the wall with a flip of her hands, then doubled up her fists and pressed them to her streaming eyes. In the shocked silence of the room, she stumbled over to Isolation and seating herself, back to the class, on the little chair, she leaned her head into the corner and sobbed quietly in big gulping sobs.

"What on earth goes on?" I asked the stupefied Davie who sat straddle-legged on the floor fingering a detached tuft of hair. "What did you do?"

"I only said 'Robber Daughter,'" said Davie. "It said so in the paper. My mama said her daddy's a robber. They put him in jail cause he robbered a gas station." His bewildered face was trying to decide whether or not to cry. Everything had happened so fast that he didn't know yet if he was hurt.

"It isn't nice to call names," I said weakly. "Get back into your seat. I'll take care of Sue-lynn later."

He got up and sat gingerly down in his chair, rubbing his ruffled hair, wanting to make more of a production of the situation but not knowing how. He twisted his face experimentally to see if he had tears available and had none.

"Dern girls," he muttered and tried to shake his fingers free of a wisp of hair.

I kept my eye on Sue-lynn for the next half hour as I busied myself with the class. Her sobs soon stopped and her rigid shoulders relaxed. Her hands were softly in her lap and I knew she was taking comfort from her Anything Box. We had our talk together later, but she was so completely sealed off from me by her misery that there was no communication between us. She sat quietly watching me as I talked, her hands trembling in her lap. It shakes the heart, somehow, to see the hands of a little child quiver like that.

That afternoon I looked up from my reading group, startled, as though by a cry, to catch Sue-lynn's frightened eyes. She looked around bewildered and then down at her hands again—her empty hands. Then she darted to the Isolation corner and reached under the chair. She went back to her seat slowly, her hands squared to an unseen weight. For the first time, apparently, she had had to go get the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Anything Box. It troubled me with a vague unease for the rest of the afternoon.

Through the days that followed while the trial hung fire, I had Sue-lynn in attendance bodily, but that was all. She sank into her Anything Box at every opportunity. And always, if she had put it away somewhere, she had to go back for it. She roused more and more reluctantly from these waking dreams, and there finally came a day when I had to shake her to waken her.

I went to her mother, but she couldn't or wouldn't understand me, and made me feel like a frivolous gossip-monger taking her mind away from her husband, despite the fact that I didn't even mention him—or maybe because I didn't mention him.

"If she's being a bad girl, spank her," she finally said, wearily shifting the weight of a whining baby from one hip to another and pushing her tousled hair off her forehead. "Whatever you do is all right by me. My worrier is all used up. I haven't got any left for the kids right now."

Well, Sue-lynn's father was found guilty and sentenced to the State Penitentiary and school was less than an hour old the next day when Davie came up, clumsily a-tiptoe, braving my wrath for interrupting a reading group, and whispered hoarsely, "Sue-lynn's asleep with her eyes open again, Teacher."

We went back to the table and Davie slid into his chair next to a completely unaware Sue-lynn. He poked her with a warning finger. "I told you I'd tell on you."

And before our horrified eyes, she toppled, as rigidly as a doll, sideways off the chair. The thud of her landing relaxed her and she lay limp on the green asphalt tile—a thin paper-doll of a girl, one hand still clenched open around something. I pried her fingers loose and almost wept to feel enchantment dissolve under my heavy touch. I carried her down to the nurse's room and we worked over her with wet towels and prayer and she finally opened her eyes.

"Teacher," she shispered weakly.

"Yes, Sue-lynn." I took her cold hands in mine.

"Teacher, I almost got in my Anything Box."

"No," I answered. "You couldn't. You're too big."

"Daddy's there," she said. "And where we used to live."

I took a long, long look at her wan face. I hope it was genuine concern for her that prompted my next words. I hope it wasn't envy or the memory of the niggling nagging of Alpha's voice that put firmness in my voice as I went on. "That's play-like," I said. "Just for fun."

Her hands jerked protestingly in mine. "Your Anything Box is just for fun. It's like Davie's cowpony that he keeps in his desk or Sojie's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

jet plane, or when the big bear chases all of you at recess. It's fun-for-play, but it's not for real. You mustn't think it's for real. It's only play."

"No!" she denied. "*No!*" she cried frantically and, hunching herself up on the cot, peering through her tear-swollen eyes, she scrabbled under the pillow and down beneath the rough blanket that covered her.

"Where is it?" she cried. "Where is it? Give it back to me, Teacher!"

She flung herself toward me and pulled open both my clenched hands.

"Where did you put it? Where did you put it?"

"There is no Anything Box," I said flatly, trying to hold her to me and feeling my heart breaking along with hers.

"You took it!" she sobbed. "You took it away from me!" And she wrenched herself out of my arms.

"Can't you give it back to her?" whispered the nurse. "If it makes her feel so bad? Whatever it is—"

"It's just imagination," I said, almost sullenly. "I can't give her back something that doesn't exist."

Too young! I thought bitterly. Too young to learn that heart's desire is only play-like.

Of course the doctor found nothing wrong. Her mother dismissed the matter as a fainting spell and Sue-lynn came back to class next day, thin and listless, staring blankly out the window, her hands palm down on the desk. I swore by the pale hollow of her cheek that never, *never* again would I take any belief from anyone without replacing it with something better. What had I given Sue-lynn? What had she better than I had taken from her? How did I know but that her Anything Box was on purpose to tide her over rough spots in her life like this? And what now, now that I had taken it from her?

Well, after a time she began to work again, and later, to play. She came back to smiles, but not to laughter. She puttered along quite satisfactorily except that she was a candle blown out. The flame was gone wherever the brightness of belief goes. And she had no more sharing smiles for me, no overflowing love to bring to me. And her shoulder shrugged subtly away from my touch.

Then one day I suddenly realized that Sue-lynn was searching our class room. Stealthily, casually, day by day she was searching, covering every inch of the room. She went through every puzzle box, every lump of clay, every shelf and cupboard, every box and bag. Methodically she checked behind every row of books and in every child's desk until finally, after almost a week, she had been through everything in the place except my desk. Then she began to materialize suddenly at my elbow every time I opened a drawer. And her eyes would probe

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quickly and sharply before I slid it shut again. But if I tried to intercept her looks, they slid away and she had some legitimate errand that had brought her up to the vicinity of the desk.

She believes it again, I thought hopefully. She won't accept the fact that her Anything Box is gone. She wants it again.

But it *is* gone. I thought drearily. It's really-for-true gone.

My head was heavy from troubled sleep, and sorrow was a weariness in all my movements. Waiting is sometimes a burden almost too heavy to carry. While my children hummed happily over their fun-stuff, I brooded silently out the window until I managed a laugh at myself. It was a shaky laugh that threatened to dissolve into something else, so I brisked back to my desk.

As good a time as any to throw out useless things, I thought, and to see if I can find that colored chalk I put away so carefully. I plunged my hands into the wilderness of the bottom right hand drawer of my desk. It was deep with a huge accumulation of anything—just anything—that might need a temporary hiding place. I knelt to pull out left-over Jack Frost pictures, and a broken bean shooter, a chewed red ribbon, a roll of cap-gun ammunition, one striped sock, six Numbers papers, a rubber dagger, a copy of *The Gospel According to St. Luke,* a miniature coal shovel, patterns for jack-o'-lanterns, and a pink plastic pelican. I retrieved my Irish linen hankie I thought lost forever and Sojie's report card that he had told me solemnly had blown out of his hand and landed on a jet and broke the sound barrier so loud that it busted all to flitters. Under the welter of miscellany, I felt a squareness. Oh, happy! I thought, this *is* where I put the colored chalk! I cascaded papers off both sides of my lifting hands and shook the box free.

We were together again. Outside, the world was an enchanting wilderness of white, the wind shouting softly through the windows, tapping wet, white fingers against the warm light. Inside all the worry and waiting, the apartness and loneliness were over and forgotten, their hugeness dwindled by the comfort of a shoulder, the warmth of clasping hands—and nowhere, nowhere was the fear of parting, nowhere the need to do without again. This was the happy ending. This was—

This was Sue-lynn's Anything Box!

My racing heart slowed as the dream faded . . . and rushed again at the realization. I had it here! In my junk drawer! It had been here all the time!

I stood up shakily, concealing the invisible box in the flare of my skirts. I sat down and put the box carefully in the center of my desk, covering the top of it with my palms lest I should drown again in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

delight. I looked at Sue-lynn. She was finishing her fun paper, competently but unjoyously. Now would come her patient sitting with quiet hands until told to do something else.

Alpha would approve. And very possibly, I thought, Alpha would, for once in her limited life, be right. We may need "hallucinations" to keep us going—all of us but the Alphas—but when we go so far as to try to force ourselves, physically, into the Neverneverland of heart's desire . . .

I remembered Sue-lynn's thin rigid body toppling doll-like off its chair. Out of her deep need she had found—or created? Who could tell? —something too dangerous for a child. I could so easily bring the brimming happiness back to her eyes—but at what a possible price!

No, I had a duty to protect Sue-lynn. Only maturity—the maturity born of the sorrow and loneliness that Sue-lynn was only beginning to know—could be trusted to use an Anything Box safely and wisely.

My heart thudded as I began to move my hands, letting the palms slip down from the top to shape the sides of—

I had moved them back again before I really saw, and I have now learned almost to forget that glimpse of what heart's desire is like when won at the cost of another's heart.

I sat there at the desk trembling and breathless, my palms moist, feeling as if I had been on a long journey away from the little schoolroom. Perhaps I had. Perhaps I had been shown all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

"Sue-lynn," I called. "Will you come up here when you're through?"

She nodded unsmilingly and snipped off the last paper from the edge of Mistress Mary's dress. Without another look at her handiwork, she carried the scissors safely to the scissors box, crumpled the scraps of paper in her hand and came up to the waste basket by the desk.

"I have something for you, Sue-lynn," I said, uncovering the box.

Her eyes dropped to the desk top. She looked indifferently up at me. "I did my fun paper already."

"Did you like it?"

"Yes." It was a flat lie.

"Good," I lied right back. "But look here." I squared my hands around the Anything Box.

She took a deep breath and the whole of her little body stiffened.

"I found it," I said hastily, fearing anger. "I found it in the bottom drawer."

She leaned her chest against my desk, her hands caught tightly between, her eyes intent on the box, her face white with the aching want you see on children's faces pressed to Christmas windows.

"Can I have it?" she whispered.

"It's yours," I said, holding it out.

Still she leaned against her hands, her eyes searching my face.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Can I have it?" she asked again.

"Yes!" I was impatient with this anticlimax. "But—"

Her eyes flickered. She had sensed my reservation before I had. "But you must never try to get into it again."

"OK," she said, the word coming out on a long relieved sigh. "OK, Teacher."

She took the box and tucked it lovingly into her small pocket. She turned from the desk and started back to her table. My mouth quirked with a small smile. It seemed to me that everything about her had suddenly turned upwards —even the ends of her straight taffy-colored hair. The subtle flame about her that made her Sue-lynn was there again. She scarcely touched the floor as she walked.

I sighed heavily and traced on the desk top with my finger a probable size for an Anything Box. What would Sue-lynn choose to see first? How like a drink after a drought it would seem to her.

I was startled as a small figure materialized at my elbow. It was Sue-lynn, her fingers carefully squared before her.

"Teacher," she said softly, all the flat emptiness gone from her voice. "Any time you want to take my Anything Box, you just say so."

I groped through my astonishment and incredulity for words. She couldn't possibly have had time to look into the Box yet.

"Why, thank you, Sue-lynn," I managed. "Thanks a lot. I would like very much to borrow it some time."

"Would you like it now?" she asked, proffering it.

"No, thank you," I said, around the lump in my throat. "I've had a turn already. You go ahead."

"OK," she murmured. Then— "Teacher?"

"Yes?"

Shyly she leaned against me, her cheek on my shoulder. She looked up at me with her warm, unshuttered eyes, then both arms were suddenly around my neck in a brief awkward embrace.

"Watch out!" I whispered laughing into the collar of her blue dress. "You'll lose it again!"

"No I won't," she laughed back, patting the flat pocket of her dress. "Not ever, ever again!"

ONCE AGAIN

THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION has in stock a supply of strong, handsome binders for your copies of F&SF. Each binder holds one complete volume — that is, six issues of the magazine. It is easy to use, handy, convenient and economical. The price is $1.50 postpaid. Send your order and remittance to: Special Binder Dept., The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, 527 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very heaven!" And few words can sum up better than those lines of Wordsworth's the feeling of all who were young in the dawn of American science fiction. Now John Christopher, author of such admirable specimens of modern s.f. as the often-reprinted Socrates, *has written for* Punch *a gently humorous yet rueful memoir (here published for the first time in America), which is the most intimately understanding sketch of the subject that I've seen in a general magazine. To those of you who were around when Mr. Christopher and I were young: Prepare yourselves with some beer to weep into. To you newcomers of the past five or ten years: This is the way it was.*

The Decline and Fall of the Bug-Eyed Monster

by JOHN CHRISTOPHER

THE THING THAT RUINS THE *Cherry Orchard* for me is when the nostalgic Russians start particularizing. Up to that point I've been content to sit back and sympathize with their gracious way of life which the rough modern world is preparing to sweep away. But when Gayef points to a cupboard and tells Madame Ranevsky, with awe, that it is a hundred years old the illusion is shattered. A mere hundred years. Mid-Victorian.

This attitude of mine is quite unreasonable, as I first realized on hearing a friend, an old-time Dixielander of 30 or thereabouts, react to bop. Nostalgia applies to the ten-year-old picnic and not to yesterday's seven thousand years. But it is only fairly recently that I have discovered that I too can have a Nostalgia; in fact that I have one, larger than life, though scarcely twice as natural.

Of my first kiss I have only the haziest recollection. It ensued as a forfeit at a children's party, and I was commanded to kiss the prettiest girl in the room. Baffled alike by natural shyness and the pitfalls of having to make a choice, I refused to play, and then, after much silent brooding, planted a bitter deter-

Reproduced by permission of the proprietors of Punch

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mined kiss on a girl twice my age, long after the game (whatever it was) was over. It is the embarrassment I recall, not the event.

But the first science fiction magazine I bought is a different matter. That was a copy of *Astounding Stories*, dated September 1932, and I paid *3d.* for it in Woolworth's on a wet Saturday afternoon. It was the cover that won me. At a rough guess I should say that something like 90 per cent of it was taken up with the convolutions of an octopus-like creature, executed in a delicate bottle-green. It was not bug-eyed (bug eyes, like the term itself, being a later effete importation), but it was magnificently a Monster.

We had some wonderful Monsters in those days. The authors let fly with their imaginations and the illustrators never failed to do them more than justice. That one in "The Green Girl," for instance, which, with an altogether chilling inconsequence, had a kind of cabbage-rose in place of a head. There were the frog-men who used human beings for racing, riding jockey-like on their back and wielding electric whips. (The hero, if I recall aright, very nearly got put out to stud at one stage.) And there were the giant wasps who paralyzed spacemen and contrived to keep them on ice for two or three centuries before laying eggs in their living flesh: one item in the larder was a white-bearded contemporary of Shakespeare (a recusant possibly), who had got away to an early start in a wooden spaceship. But I think my favourite was the Creature who sat athwart the planet Mars and spread his tentacles in vast straight lines from pole to pole. *Hinc illi canales*, as Schiaparelli might have said in a classical moment.

Those were the days when science fiction was dedicated to Science, and the writers were encouraged to append long footnotes to their stories, describing how electricity worked. The heroes were almost always scientists and, apart from the occasional mad one with the lovely daughter, were fine upstanding American idealists to boot. I well remember the uproar when an author set up a business man against a scientist in the task of reconstructing a shattered world, and allowed the business man to come out on top. The only form of political propaganda tolerated was propaganda for Technocracy: the Rule of the Scientist. I believe it still has its adherents in the remoter parts of California.

To us it was unthinkable that science fiction should ever falter in its liturgical devotion to Science. The notion that Mr. Edmund Crispin[1] would one day praise it for having "rediscovered Original Sin" would have been the poorest kind of blasphemy. We were the children of Original Virtue — Rousseau, one might say, with cog-wheels.

[1] *In the introduction to his excellent anthology, unpublished in this country,* BEST SF (London: *Faber & Faber, 1955*). — A. B.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But practically everything in mid-century science fiction would have horrified us. Sex, for instance. In our young days a little decorous romance was the most that could be accepted, and then without enthusiasm. I recall one author who offered us a future in which, with the perfection of extra-uterine gestation, women had been abolished. When one did, in error, slip through the controls she was put in a museum, to be gawked at not only by the male-only human race but by Venusians (large beetles) and Martians (even larger lizards) as well. The author, as far as we were concerned, was batting on a good wicket.

Nor did we have much truck with telepaths and ESP-ers. Telepathy, when it was introduced, was simply the means by which the extra-terrestrial Monsters outlined their inordinate demands; and occasionally the refuge of man's remoter descendants who, in the world of a million years hence, had grown weary of waggling their jaws. Telepathy for its own sake, as it were, was as unthinkable as sex, or literary pretension. Those were the days when the young Ray Bradbury spent his time composing bad puns for a science fiction fan magazine.

The very names of the authors cry aloud the change. Then they had exotic sonorous names. Raymond Z. Gallun, Arthur Leo Zagat, Epaminondas T. Snooks, Junior.[2] Nowadays there is a note of suburban respectability about them: Theodore Sturgeon, John Wyndham, Arthur C. Clarke, Jonathan Burke. With such a passionate sobriety of name, is it any wonder that they model themselves on Hemingway and Henry James, and get reviewed in *The Times Literary Supplement?*

Yet even here conscience lingers and pricks. They, too, must remember the Monsters, before they got bug-eyed, before the giant strides of astronomy banished them from Mars and Venus and all the other planets on which, today, not even the smallest Monster could scrape a living. And John Wyndham at least has kept something of the old tradition: viewed objectively, the Triffids and the Kraken can hold their own with any.

But who could view his Monsters objectively? Who would wish to? The Triffids, the Kraken, can yield no *frisson* of horror now. The change is in us, and we must go our way into old age, making imaginary pot-shots with our imaginary ray-guns. While, out in the orchard, the science fiction magazines topple, one by one.

---

[2] *Mr. Christopher is not making up a syllable. Snooks, who later wrote under the drabber name of C. P. Mason, published three stories in* Wonder, *1932–1934.* — A. B.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When this issue appears, Robert Bloch will be in New York, serving as master of ceremonies for the banquet of the 14th World Science Fiction Convention; and I doubt that anywhere in Manhattan, in night club or Broadway revue, will one find a more suave and witty m.c. (Or should a science fiction m.c. be an mc²?) Bloch's previous stories in F&SF have been surprisingly serious in theme and treatment: but now he casts a humorous eye (with a faintly bawdy twinkle in it) upon the much-publicized new science of psionics.

Try This for Psis

by ROBERT BLOCH

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A sane scientist who had an ugly daughter.

The scientist's name was Dr. Angus Welk, and in the Anthropology Department of a large eastern university he was the brachycephalic head. He was, naturally, a staunch believer in the physical sciences. At the same time, he detested anything abstract. He had a particular hatred for that branch of scientific investigation known as parapsychology—the investigation of extra-sensory perception and psychokinesis. "There is absolutely no such thing as telepathy," he often declared. "It's all in your mind."

Nor was Dr. Welk content to let the matter rest there. He made a constant habit of challenging every investigator in the field of ESP or psi phenomena. He heckled them at lectures, he wrote indignant letters to psychiatric journals, he published a long monograph entitled *Extra-Sensory Deception*. And during his summer vacation, when his colleagues roamed over the New England states with their cameras, happily exposing film, Dr. Welk covered the same territory, happily exposing spiritualist mediums. So perhaps Dr. Welk was not completely sane.

And maybe his daughter, Nora, was not entirely ugly. True, everything about her was just a little larger than life-size. Her nose was a trifle big and her mouth was too wide, and her cheekbones were so prominent they might easily have run for public office. But in an era which bows down before the busts of Monroe, Russell, Lollobrigida and Ekberg, she possessed certain other attributes which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

might be considered outstanding. In fact, one might easily search the wide world over without finding her equal in either hemisphere.

It was not necessary, however, to conduct a global mission in order to discover Nora Welk's whereabouts. As a graduate student she served as her father's secretary, and also ran his household. Dr. Welk was a widower, and secretly considered himself fortunate in that his daughter had never shown the slightest interest in young men.

"When the right mate for you comes along," he often told her, "I'll let you know. I'll recognize him by his cephalic index, and we'll conduct a controlled experiment. A true eugenic mating, my dear. Won't that be nice?"

Nora used to agree that it would be just splendid, but as time went on she began to entertain doubts. Maybe that's because doubts were all she ever had to entertain—nobody asked her for a date, and whenever she timidly mentioned a young man's name in her father's presence he would denounce the individual as a dolichocephalic dolt.

Just how long they might have continued their sane, ugly life together is problematical—if a problem hadn't arisen in the shape of Frank Tallent.

Frank Tallent didn't have much of a shape. He was short, sandy-haired, and myopic, and weighed about a hundred and ten pounds, dripping wet—if he climbed on the bathroom scales with a heavy bar of soap in each hand.

But he happened to sit next to Nora Welk at a lecture one evening, and the damage was done.

All during the talk he kept staring at her profile, occasionally lifting his eyes to her face, and when the session ended he noticed that she seemed to have some trouble finding her purse.

As she groped about her, he touched her arm. "I beg your pardon, Miss," he said. "But the purse is under your seat."

Nora blinked at him. "I just looked there," she declared.

Frank Tallent reddened. "I wasn't referring to the wooden one," he murmured. "If you'll just get up . . ."

Sure enough, there was the purse.

Now it was Nora's turn to blush. "Thank you," she said. "I can't imagine how it got there. I guess I was so interested in the speech I didn't notice when it slid behind me." She smiled at Frank. "It *was* an interesting speech, wasn't it?"

"I thought it stunk," Frank said, with more vehemence than grammar.

Nora's eyes flashed. "Is that so? And just what was wrong with it, might I ask?"

"Why, that old goat doesn't know what he's talking about," Frank answered. "Just because you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can't weigh it or measure it or put it under a microscope, he claims there isn't any such thing as clairvoyance."

"I suppose you know differently?"

"Of course I do." Frank peered up at her through his glasses. "I'm taking a special course in the Psych Department, under Professor Seine. He's probably the most famous authority on parapsychology in the country."

Nora sniffed. "Professor Seine is a crackpot," she declared. "And the old goat who delivered tonight's lecture happens to be my father."

She started to brush past Frank, but the young man reached out his hand and grabbed her by the elbow.

"Better empty out your purse first, before you go," he said. "The stopper came out of your perfume bottle and your things are getting soaked."

Nora halted and scrabbled in her handbag.

"You're right!" she exclaimed. "How on earth did you know—?"

"I'm a psychic sensitive." Frank answered, modestly. "Dr. Seine is using me to run experiments. I could see what was going on inside your handbag. It isn't a matter of actual eyesight, you know."

Nora started to nod, then shook her head. "Of course not," she agreed. "It isn't eyesight at all. You could smell that perfume leaking and you just jumped to conclusions. My father says that's how Professor Seine distorts all his data. He's explained everything to me—but of course, *you* wouldn't be interested."

"On the contrary, I'm very much interested," Frank protested. "Maybe you'd be good enough to tell me about your father's theories. Over a cup of coffee, perhaps?"

Nora hesitated a moment.

"I'll buy you a hamburger, too," Frank went on. "After all, you didn't eat any supper."

"How did you know that?"

"Psychic." Frank grinned faintly as he rose. Nora hesitated once more.

"Don't worry about your father," Frank went on. "He's backstage talking to the reporters, telling them what a fool Professor Seine is and what a courageous investigator *he* is."

"Is that supposed to be another demonstration of your psychic powers?" Nora inquired.

"Just a guess," Frank admitted. "But I'm right, aren't I?"

"Probably. Only you're wrong about my father and his theories. Let me tell you—"

So she told him over a hamburger, and over a cup of coffee, and over two cigarettes.

At the end of it all, Frank Tallent sighed. "I'm sorry," he said. "I've heard all these arguments before. Table-tipping and levitation isn't telekinesis, but a fake. Mind-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

precognition in dreams is just coincidence, and so forth. But the trouble is, *I* can do these things. I do them every day, with Professor Seine. He says I'm the most remarkable subject he's seen since Lady, the Talking Horse."

"Does he hypnotize you?" Nora asked, as they left the restaurant and walked along the darkened streets.

"Of course not. It's just something that seems to come naturally. I never knew I had ESP or psi powers at all until I came to the university and got into his class. He asked for volunteers one day when he was demonstrating telekinesis with a pair of dice, and I got up and threw thirty passes in a row. After that he took an interest in me."

"Who wouldn't?" Nora scoffed. "If I could throw thirty passes in a row I'd go to Las Vegas and make a fortune."

"It isn't that easy," Frank explained. "Apparently the subliminal mind is influenced adversely by the conscious mind when the element of personal gain enters into the situation. I had the same idea after throwing the passes, of course. I got into a little crap game with some of the boys in my dormitory."

"What happened?"

"I lost eighteen bucks the first five minutes."

"You see?" Nora nodded. "It doesn't really work. That's why none of these so-called mind readers ever make a killing on the stock market."

"I explained about that," Frank answered. "You can't control the phenomena. And if you're seeking some kind of reward, you freeze up. But the fact remains, I *did* throw thirty straight passes with those dice in the classroom."

"Then either the dice were loaded, or you were."

"Impossible. Professor Seine is an honest man, and I don't drink." Frank took the girl's arm as they entered the park and halted near a bench. "If I could only make you understand," he said. "Sit down here a moment. Maybe I can give you a demonstration."

They took their places on a bench.

"Now," Frank began. "Take your feet off the ground. That's it. I'll do the same. We're sitting quietly, right? And the bench is firmly balanced on the grass, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Watch this," Frank said.

Suddenly the bench beneath them began to move. It tipped forward and the girl, with a gasp of astonishment, slid into his arms.

"What happened?" she murmured.

"Telekinesis," he told her, tightening his embrace. "What do you think of it?"

"It's wonderful," Nora sighed, snuggling closer.

"Would you like another demon-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stration? How about a little supernormal perception?"

"Whatever you say." Nora was beginning to feel quite conscious of this young man's psychic aura; it positively made her tingle all over. She had never dreamed that a scientific experiment could be so interesting.

To her disappointment, Frank released her suddenly and stood up.

"All right," he said. "Here's what you do. I'm going to walk over there and stand under that tree, with my back to you. I want you to take something out of your purse and hide it while I'm not looking. Then it's up to me to find it."

Strictly in the spirit of scientific inquiry, Nora selected an old class ring from the bottom of her purse and tucked it under the inner pleat at the neckline of her blouse.

When Frank returned to her side he immediately placed his fingers on her throat and again Nora felt the tingling thrill she was learning to associate with parapsychological investigation. As she felt his hand gradually descend, however, she became apprehensive.

"What do you think you're doing?" she snapped.

"Why, looking for your ring," Frank told her. "It is a ring you concealed, isn't it?"

"Yes—but not *there*. It's up there, under the neckline."

"That's where you intended to put it," Frank answered, continuing his search. "But it slipped down. In fact, quite a ways down. Don't worry, though, I'll get it."

"It can't be *that* far down," the girl protested.

"Oh, but it is. Hold still! Remember, this is just an experiment."

Even controlled experiments can sometimes get out of hand, and this particular experiment rapidly became uncontrolled. There was no doubt in either of their minds, however, as to the experiment's success. Within two minutes Frank had found Nora's ring, and before another five minutes had elapsed, they were engaged to be married.

Since Dr. Angus Welk did not possess psi powers, he was quite blissfully unaware of his daughter's clandestine engagement. This situation seemed ideal to both Nora and Frank. Their courtship was conducted in the park and at times in the last parking space at the rear of a drive-in movie. Since neither of them cared for motion pictures, they were free to continue their research into the supernormal, and Nora quickly graduated from the status of willing pupil to adoring convert. She soon learned that no matter what she hid nor where she hid it, Frank could seek it out unerringly. Just how long she might have continued as a subject for a wide field of investigations is problematical, had not an unforeseen crisis arisen.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The unforeseen crisis, in the person of Professor Seine, changed everything. The unforeseen Seine suddenly went off on a parapsychological wingding.

"It's murder, that's what it is!" Frank announced to Nora one late summer evening, after greeting her at the park entrance they had chosen for a trysting place. "Did you see tonight's paper? Did your father tell you?"

She shook her head. "No, I've just come from the office. Daddy stayed home all day today. What's the matter?"

"It's Seine. He's been grumbling about your father's attacks on him for months now. Says it's ridiculous that two men from the same university faculty should dispute with each other about a perfectly self-evident matter. And now he wants to bring the matter to a head. He issued a public challenge to your father today. Invited him to select a committee of six—anyone he wants—to witness a demonstration of parapsychological phenomena. He's coming to your father's house tomorrow with a subject, prepared to prove his case."

"That's terrible," the girl agreed. "Daddy's going to be awfully upset."

"He's not the only one," Frank muttered. "The subject Professor Seine selected for his demonstrations happens to be me."

"No—he couldn't!"

"He could, and he did. After all, I'm his star example. He wants to write this book about me, remember?"

"But why didn't you refuse?"

Frank paused and gulped.

"You could have refused," Nora continued, relentlessly. "Didn't we agree we'd keep our engagement a secret until you graduated, so Daddy would never know you were mixed up in these experiments? Didn't I tell you that he'd rather see me married to a psychopath than to a psychic sensitive? And didn't you promise me that you'd give up your investigations after you finished school and get an honest job in some laboratory where they do *real* psychological work—like ringing bells and teaching dogs to salivate?"

"Sure," Frank answered. "I wanted to make a good impression on your father. Approach him wearing a white smock and carrying a test-tube full of airedale saliva in one hand. But Professor Seine has convinced me, Nora. This work is more important. If we can control ESP and psi powers it means the opening of a whole new era. Your father's a scientist. Surely, if we demonstrate the truth to him, he'll understand."

Nora began to sniffle. "He's a scientist, yes, but as you once remarked, he's also an old goat. Can't you understand? No matter what kind of proof you present, he won't believe it. He'll just hate you for it and then we'll never get

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

married." She sobbed aloud. "I don't think you really want to marry me, anyway. You just like to have somebody around to experiment on."

"That's not true, you know it isn't. I'm sure we're going to be married." Frank spoke gravely. "My supernormal percipience is never wrong. I've told you that sometimes I have these prophetic dreams, haven't I? And they always come true. Well, last night I had another. In this dream I saw you lying in bed. And you weren't alone."

"Let's not be vulgar," the girl murmured.

"What's vulgar about a baby?" Frank demanded. "You were lying in bed with this newborn child. Cutest little thing you ever saw—looked just like me."

"Boy or girl?" Nora asked, eagerly.

"That I can't tell you. The alarm rang and I woke up. You know how noises distract psi powers. Professor Seine has already warned your father about that—tomorrow's experiments must be conducted under fair conditions."

Nora put her hands on his shoulders. "You really intend to marry me, then," she said, softly.

"Of course I do. And the dream proves it."

"It proves something else, too, then," the girl said. "The experiments can't be conducted fairly."

"What are you getting at?"

"Listen to me, now. I *know* Daddy. If you go to him and demonstrate your powers, he'll just flip. On the other hand, if you flop, he'll be delighted. He'll feel so good about proving his case that he'll agree to anything. I know this isn't the Dark Ages, darling—we could get married without his consent, any time we want. But I happen to love him too, even if he is an old goat. And I don't want to spend the rest of my life in the middle of a family quarrel."

"Do you want to spend the rest of your life with a faker?" Frank snapped. "As far as I'm concerned, we *are* in the Dark Ages, until we successfully demonstrate the unsuspected powers of the human mind. Now Professor Seine's theory—"

Nora stamped her foot. "I wish Professor Seine would stick his theory in a pigeonhole and forget it! What I want to know, will you play along with me or won't you?"

"There's nothing I'd rather do," said Frank, and meant it. "But Nora, I just *can't*. Don't worry, things will work out anyway. I saw our baby in a dream—"

"As far as I'm concerned, that's the only place you'll ever see it," Nora told him.

The girl turned and clattered out of the park. Frank sat down on a bench and groaned. He knew he was right. They *were* going to have a baby. But now he realized that it wasn't going to be accomplished through extra-sensory perception.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Professor Étienne Seine whistled with Gallic gaiety as he piloted his Porsche in the direction of Dr. Welk's big house just outside of town. The Professor, despite his position as a member of the psychological *savant-garde,* had not developed any ESP powers of his own. Consequently it was some time before he noted the dejected air of the young man seated at his side.

"What is it that there is?" he inquired, solicitously. "What sickens you? Is it that you dread the testing?"

Frank shook his head and attempted a reassuring smile. Evidently it was a failure, because Professor Seine continued to regard him quizzically.

"Is it that it is something you ate? Your stomach, she is upset?"

"My stomach, she is empty," Frank told him.

"Ah, that is best, *mon brave.*" The Professor nodded gravely. "As we well comprehend, the success of ESP or psi experimentation can be imperiled by physical distractions. Eating and drinking spoil the victory. What is that which the poet says? 'There's many a slip between *coupe* and lip.' But be of cheer, we shall not fail. We shall convince the Doctor Welk and his committee, we shall convince the reporters—"

"Reporters?" Frank groaned. "Oh no!"

"Oh, *oui!*" Profesor Seine gestured ahead as they rounded the driveway leading to the Welk mansion. "Regard them."

Frank regarded the waiting figures grouped on the porch. He recognized several of Dr. Welk's colleagues on the faculty, plus two or three young men with the inevitable notebooks clustered around the corpulent red-faced man who scowled down at them over the rims of his glasses. A glimpse of Dr. Welk's eyes was enough to terrify Frank, until he realized their bulging prominence was due to a trick of the spectacle lenses. From their thickness, it was reasonable to assume they had been ground at Mount Palomar.

"Myopique," the Professor murmured, apparently noting the same thing as he left the car and conducted Frank up the steps. "But he will see much, today."

Frank didn't answer. He was searching for a sight of Nora. The girl was not in evidence.

He hastily recalled himself to acknowledge introductions. In response to a question from one of the reporters, he enunciated his name slowly.

"Tallent," the reporter repeated, as he scribbled. "Didn't somebody write a book about you? Charles Fort, maybe?"

"Charles Fort was an old fool." The rasping voice belonged to Dr. Welk. "Except, of course, when he was young. Then he was a young fool."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Professor Seine laughed merrily. "It is this scepticism which we today shall overcome," he predicted. "If anyone advances anything new, people resist with all their might; they act as if they neither heard nor could comprehend; they speak of the new view with contempt, as if it were not worth the trouble of even so much as an investigation or a regard; and thus a new truth may wait a long time before it can make its way."

"Just the kind of nonsense I expected from you," Dr. Welk observed.

The Professor shrugged. "This is not my nonsense," he answered, mildly. "It is a statement of Gertie."

"Humph, I might have known. Gertie was a fool, too. Very unsound. All you have to do is look at his prefrontal lobes."

"This Gertie a friend of yours?" one of the reporters demanded, eagerly. But before the Professor could answer him, a disturbance made its appearance—and a very charming appearance it was—in the form of Nora.

This form was duly admired as the young woman passed among the group and distributed glasses of a pink liquid.

"I thought you gentlemen might like a little refreshment before you began the tests," she said.

"Hey, Bacardis!" exclaimed the reporter who wanted to know about Gertie.

The girl shook her head. "No, it's only fruit punch." She approached Frank and gave him a level stare. He started to open his mouth, but his throat went dry. Automatically he accepted a glass and drank. He wished now that Nora had stayed away. Her presence disturbed him greatly, and her aloofness disturbed him even more. He found it difficult to concentrate on what was going on.

Professor Seine had taken over now, and he was telling the reporters and Dr. Welk's committee a few things about telepathy, telekinesis, teleportation, clairvoyance, and dowsing. From a briefcase he extracted a mimeographed report of his past six months of experimentation with Frank—the card-runs, the work with dice, the psychometric data.

Dr. Welk cleared his throat for action. "Twaddle," he said. "Sheer twaddle. Nobody can read minds." He strode over to Professor Seine. "Go ahead and read my mind, I dare you to." He glanced at his daughter. "On second thought, maybe you'd better wait until Nora leaves. What I'm thinking about you is best not repeated in mixed company."

"But I do not read of minds," the Professor protested. "It is the young man here. He is the sensitive."

Frank smiled weakly. He didn't feel like a sensitive. He was numb. He watched Nora refill the glasses from a large pitcher and extended

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his own with an imploring look. Nora refused to meet his eyes. He couldn't tell what she was thinking. He couldn't—the realization came to him with a flash of horror—tell what *anyone* was thinking. His head was beginning to whirl.

"Let's go inside," Dr. Welk was saying, "and get this affair over with. I can't afford to waste much time with such tomfoolery—I've got a four o'clock appointment to trepan a gorilla."

He led the party into a large old-fashioned study, with book-lined walls; obviously this was his private den in which he was wont to pace and growl at will.

"You'll find I have made the arrangements we agreed upon," he told Professor Seine. "As I understood it, you asked me to conceal a deck of cards somewhere within the room, and also a packet of letters—"

"Would you care for another drink before you begin?" Nora interrupted, coming in from the hall with a full pitcher. "It's so hot today...."

"Sure," said the reporter who had asked about Charles Fort. "Say, you positive there isn't any liquor in this? Stuff tastes like it's got a kick in it."

"Not at all," Nora told him. "As I understand it, liquor affects the precognitive faculties, doesn't it, Professor?"

"Certainement," he responded. And as the company drank, Professor Seine proceeded to explain the theories he was to demonstrate.

Frank tried again to concentrate upon the conversation, but everything was blurry. Nora's face wavered before him as she poured the contents of the pitcher into his glass. He tried to whisper to her. "Darling, won't you at least say something to me? I'm so—"

But she had turned away, and now Professor Seine had his hand on Frank's shoulder and was propelling him to the table in the center of the room. He gestured at the crowd, indicating a row of chairs lined up against the far wall.

"And now, *messieurs,*" he began, "if you will be so good as to discover your seats, we shall make a commencement. First we shall have the card-run, as I have explained. The Doctor has undertaken to conceal a pack of playing cards here in this room. I shall now ask my subject to locate those cards."

He turned to Frank expectantly. Frank stood there—conscious of the perspiration bathing his palms, and of nothing else. He couldn't concentrate. The room wavered. It was Nora's fault—she had deliberately upset him so that the experiment would be a failure. He glanced nervously at Professor Seine. The gaunt investigator looked at him trustingly. It would be terrible to let him down now. It would be terrible to let himself down. Dr. Welk was scowling, murmuring to the committee and the reporters.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Frank closed his eyes. Immediately the room steadied. He began to get a vague impression. It didn't come quickly or clearly, as such impressions usually did, but it was coming.

Eyes closed, he moved forward. One hand swept the line of bookcases. He fumbled for a book, removed it, reached behind. From a space between the books and the wall he extracted a rectangular object. Opening his eyes, he gazed down at a package of playing cards.

His sigh of relief mingled with a sharp gasp from Dr. Welk.

"But that's not where I put them!" he exclaimed. "There must be some mistake—"

"Mistake?" Professor Seine smiled blandly as he took the unopened pack from Frank's hand. "You concealed of the cards, did you not? And my subject found of the cards, did he not? Let us proceed to the experiment."

Deftly he blindfolded Frank and placed him in the far corner of the room. Then, stepping briskly to the table, Professor Seine removed the pack, shuffled it, and extended it to the nearest committee member. Upon a whispered instruction, the committee member shuffled the pack again. A second committee member now laid the first card face down upon the table, in plain view.

Frank stood motionless.

"What do you perceive?" the Professor called.

Frank gulped. He clenched his fists.

"*Eh bien,* what is it that you see?" the Professor insisted.

Frank shuddered. "Must I tell?" he quavered.

"But well sure, you must! Describe the card, please!"

"All right," Frank muttered. "You asked for it. This card has the picture of a naked blonde lying on her back and kicking a heart in the air with both feet. I suppose it's the ace of hearts."

As the crowd gasped, Frank raced on. "And the second card, with the brunette and the pony, is the four of spades. The redhead and the sailor is the seven of diamonds, and the next one, with the three girls wearing the black brassieres, is the nine of clubs—"

By this time Professor Seine was at the table, rapidly turning over the cards. Frank was right: the ace of hearts was followed, in turn, by the others as he'd described them.

"A wolf-pack, by George!" exclaimed one of the reporters, crowding up to the table. "And boy, *what* a wolf-pack. Look at this here Queen of Diamonds; how'd she get mixed up with the Jack? Hey, Doc, I didn't know you had anything like this around—"

"Neither did I," muttered Dr. Welk. "I mean, this is definitely *not* the deck I concealed. One of my students recently returned from a field expedition to Cuba. He brought back some curiosa for an-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thropological study and left them with me—"

"Yeah, sure," said the reporter. "We know how it is, Doc." He tried to riffle through the rest of the deck, but Dr. Welk snatched it away. "Perhaps we'd better get on with the next phase," he said. "We'll consider this sufficient evidence."

"Ah yes." Professor Seine bowed blandly. "There is now the matter of the letters." He removed Frank's bandage, and in a low voice murmured, "What arrives?"

"Damned if I know," Frank said. "I think you'd better call it off. Everything's going blank again."

"Here, have a drink." Nora was at his elbow, extending a glass. Frank was about to wave it away until he realized she was smiling. He drank gratefully, although his throat burned. She passed around the room, refilling glasses.

Finally the Professor rapped for attention. "My good colleague has been instructed to conceal some letters in this room. I shall now ask that the subject find these communiqués and read of them aloud to you."

Frank shook his head. As he did so, the subliminal came to his aid. He walked waveringly to the desk, then paused. Dr. Welk's eyes narrowed, but as Frank moved away from the desk he gave a sigh of relief.

His bulging eyes widened again as Frank paused in front of a portrait of Whistler's Mother, then pushed it aside and began to manipulate the combination of a safe concealed behind the picture.

"That's not the place!" Dr. Welk shouted, rising. "And how did you know the combination, anyway?"

Frank, moving as though in a trance, continued to twirl the dial. The safe swung open. Frank reached in and extracted a packet of letters, bound in faded red ribbons. He put his hand over them, his eyes closing.

"The first letter is dated June 12, 1932," he muttered. "And it begins like this: *Dear Honeybug, It is morning now but I can still taste your kisses. If only the nights would never end—*"

"Give me those!" Dr. Welk snatched the bundle from his hand and stuffed it into his coat.

"Aren't you going to tell us if he's right, Doc?" cried the nearest reporter. "What's with this 'Honeybug' business?"

Dr. Welk's face blossomed with a sudden case of rubella. "These are positively not the letters I had in mind," he groaned. "Professor Seine, what is the meaning of this? Are you making mock of me?"

"Non," the parapsychologist protested. "I do not make the mock of you." He glanced nervously at Frank, who stood there goggling. "We will commence the next phase of the experiment, please." Professor Seine blinked and popped his hand to his mouth to stifle an un-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

expected belch. Several of the committee members noted the gesture and laughed raucously. Nora tittered in the background.

Professor Seine shrugged and made haste to continue. "Dr. Welk has arranged certain objects in his lavatory, is it not?"

"It is certainly not," Dr. Welk boomed. "What I do in the lavatory is no concern of this investigation."

"Why not, Doc?" asked the most persistent of the two reporters, lurching to his feet. "Now take me, for instance. I do a lot of reading in the—"

"Kindly shut your trap!" shouted Dr. Welk. "Professor Seine has reference to my laboratory. He asked me to arrange something on the table there, to test the subject's ESP powers."

"Ah yes," the Professor nodded. "It is as I say, the laboratory in which the good Doctor conducts of the experiments, and not the lavatory, in which the good Doctor—"

"Get on with it!" yelled Dr. Welk. "I'm stifling in here and I've got a splitting headache. I put some stuff out on the table. Your stooge has never been in my laboratory. He's supposed to guess what's in there. Now, go ahead!"

Frank turned and put his palms to his forehead. He felt the room reel. His mouth opened, seemingly of its own volition. The words came. "Reading from left to right," he said, "I see a series of jars. The first one contains dill pickles. The second one contains a pickled foetus. The third one contains pure water."

He opened his eyes. "That's right, isn't it?" he asked.

Dr. Welk nodded reluctantly. "As far as it goes," he conceded. "But what about the fourth one?"

"Fourth one?" Frank frowned. "There is no fourth one."

"Oh yes there is," Dr. Welk exclaimed triumphantly. "Come along and I'll show you."

The group trooped down the hall at Dr. Welk's heels. He moved slowly and seemed to have some difficulty opening the laboratory door. But once inside he gestured at the table with a flourish.

"You see?" he announced. "Four jars!"

"Uh uh," said the eldest committee member. "Six."

"You're seeing double," his nearest neighbor told him. "There's only three."

"Three!" echoed Professor Seine. *"Regardez donc!"*

"Four, in plain English!" contradicted Dr. Welk. Then he stared. "Where'd it go?" he panted. "Where'd it disappear to? I could have sworn I had a fourth jar there. It was filled with a gallon of medical alco—"

"Anyone for punch?" murmured Nora, sweetly, as she appeared in the doorway with a refilled pitcher.

Frank bore down upon her. He brushed her aside and whispered hastily. "So that's it, that's what

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you did! Spiked punch! You knew I was affected by alcohol, you wanted to ruin the experiment. Well, I'll show you—"

But he had no time to show her anything. Professor Seine was leading them back along the hall, and out of the house.

"We conclude with the dowsing," he said.

"Dowsing?" The reporter who knew Fort's name was instantly alert. "That's where you find water with a forked stick, isn't it? But what's that got to do with psi?"

"It is an example of the clairvoyance, of a supernormal perceptive power," Professor Seine told him, accepting a glass of punch. "The willow wand, she is not necessary; she is mere superstition. *La radiesthésie*—that which you name the dowsing—can be accomplished as well with a bent coat hanger, as you will quickly see."

"Or just as poorly," murmured Dr. Welk, lowering his voice so that Professor Seine could not hear him. "I took the trouble to get some of the boys from the Geology Department over here. You'll find their reports inside. There's no water on my land anywhere—it's dry as a bone. Watch and see."

Professor Seine, for his part, had collared the reporters, both of whom were accepting their fifth glass of punch from Nora.

"This instrument you observe on the lawn," he explained. "He is a portable well-digger I made rent of this morning. When my young friend discovers water, I shall avail myself of it to make the bore. Attend, he emanates from the house now with the coat hanger."

Frank was emanating, but not very rapidly. A slow anger churned within him, mingling with the alcohol he had unwittingly consumed. Nora was giggling openly at him, but nobody seemed to notice it—the punch had done its work too well. Any attempt at extra-sensory perception seemed doomed; for that matter nobody was in a condition to attempt normal perception. The side-lawn was littered with straggling drunks as though a cocktail party had broken up and strewed the guests helterskelter across the sward.

Dr. Welk was shouting incoherently at him and waving his arms. "C'mon, let's finish this up!" he called. "Don't forget, I've got a four o'clock date with a gorilla!"

"This is not of the time for monkey business," Professor Seine retorted. "I ask that you be silent as the grave. The subject must concentrate with the utmost."

Frank raised the coat hanger. He took a deep breath, hoping to restore his sobriety. He had found water before; if there was a trace of moisture anywhere on this land, he knew the forces within him would inevitably lead him to it. The coat hanger would jerk, then

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

point. And Professor Seine would drill. The Professor stalked behind him, panting now as he lifted the heavy portable driller with its long electrical cord trailing behind from its extension plug-in back at the house. The cord was three hundred feet long. Frank began to walk, slowly, his head bent.

"Stop!" murmured the Professor. "The cord, she is at the end of her rope."

Frank retraced his steps. The coat hanger remained steadily outstretched before him. The crowd trailed behind, stumbling and giggling. Suddenly Frank wheeled abruptly and started for the house. He halted just under one of the bay windows and the coat hanger jerked down as if independently directed.

"Here," Frank whispered.

Professor Seine began to rig his drill.

"No!" Dr. Welk protested. "No, there isn't any water! I've had the place inspected, there can't be! Don't ruin my flower-beds—don't you dare turn that thing on—stop him, somebody!"

But as the group converged on Frank and the Professor, the drill went into action. There was a whirring, a piercing of soft earth. And then—

A geyser spouted from the sod.

A wave of water spurted upwards, then fell in a flashing arc to drench the crowd.

Frank beamed at the girl.

"I did it!" he cried.

"Sacre!" ejaculated the Professor. *"Sacre du Printemps!"*

"Look!" Frank grabbed Nora and shook her, holding her under the spray. "He's got to believe me now, doesn't he? I can do anything, liquor or no liquor. I can produce apports, poltergeists, phenomena, anything. I've got the power, see? I can levitate, teleport—just you watch me—"

"You damned fool!" Dr. Welk staggered over. "Know what you just did? *You hit the city water main!"*

Professor Seine was frantically tugging at the drill. "It is immovable," he gasped. "I cannot extricate it—"

"Here, let me try!" Frank tugged at it, then turned. "Never mind, I'll levitate it." He faced the drenched and leaping crowd. "Now watch!" he yelled. "I'll prove I have psi powers once and for all—look at this!"

He allowed the darkness to surge over him, the blurry, alcoholic darkness. With his inner eye he could see the drill rising out of the ground as if of its own accord. He could see it lifting higher and higher. He strained to elevate it, watched it twirl above his head, and then the effort was too much. It was dropping, coming closer and closer. Frank tried to dodge, but he was too late. As the shrieking committee scattered in all directions, the drill landed on Frank's head and the darkness closed in.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It took ten stitches to patch up his skull, but Nora patched up the rest. Before the sobered, sodden committee left the house they had agreed to keep silence on the entire affair—including their own part in it. Perhaps Nora's admission about the spiked punch helped. At any rate, no one was willing to go on record as having participated in the debacle. As for the reporters, neither of them was inclined to turn in a story.

"Who'd believe it anyway?" said the one who was interested in Fort. "My city editor's death on that kind of stuff. He wouldn't recognize a flying saucer if his wife hit him with one."

Professor Seine was happy, however. In his eyes the experiment was a complete success, and once he was assured Frank's injury wasn't serious, he even agreed to pay for the cost of repairing the damaged water main.

Dr. Welk's reaction was curiously complex. He had seen enough to modify his attitude on parapsychology—but at the same time he had his reputation to consider. Fortunately, as Nora pointed out, no one would know. She certainly wouldn't say anything, and neither would Frank.

The young man didn't learn all this until later. He sat up in bed at the hospital and listened to Nora's account.

"So you see, it all worked out for the best," she told him. "Daddy isn't angry at you for what happened. He feels you saved him, really."

"*I* saved him?"

Nora blushed. "Yes. I told him it was your idea to spike the punch that way."

"But darling—"

"Don't you see? It's all right now. We can be married, and you can continue your experiments in private, if you want."

"No I can't." Frank's tone was sepulchral.

"What do you mean?"

"That blow on the head. It did something to me. I . . . I've been testing. The power doesn't work any more. I can't tell what's written on my chart, and I don't even know what you have in your purse."

Nora sighed. "I don't know whether I'm happy or sad," she said, reaching for his hand. "But don't worry. Maybe it will come back when you're well again."

She was wrong, of course. It didn't come back. And some nine months after they were married—and Frank had an excellent job as assistant to Dr. Welk, cataloguing the pelvic bones of Australian aborigines—came the fatal hour.

As the young man paced the floor outside the delivery room, a nurse asked him the usual question. "Which do you think it will be?" she inquired. "Boy or girl?"

"Damned if I know," Frank groaned. "What do you think I am—a mind reader?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It's an understatement to call Jay Williams merely "versatile." His last story to appear here (The Asa Rule, *F&SF, June, 1956*) *was science fiction, combining Mars, anthropology and love. His latest book — unless another of his historical novels has come out meanwhile — is non-fiction, telling humorously and philosophically of European travels with wife and children* (A CHANGE OF CLIMATE, *Random, 1956*). *And this new story is quietly realistic fantasy, about a witch, a borning room, a thermostat, and the conviction that "The human mind is capable of anything. Anything at all."*

Mr. Guthrie's Cold War

by JAY WILLIAMS

WHEN GUTHRIE BOUGHT HIS OLD house in the country he began thinking of himself as a country squire. He denied it, of course, to his friends, but the idea appealed to him. He saw himself in corduroys and boots rambling over the dewy fields, or hallooing after laborers in the haying, or perhaps strolling with his shotgun and his hound, a pipe between his teeth, through the marshland on the fringe of the woods. He bought the house quickly and without a survey, so that it was only after a month or so he discovered that the hay meadows, marshland, and wood all belonged to his neighbor, Mrs. Jane Elpham.

Guthrie had no business sense whatever, and his absence of acumen was rivaled only by his utter tactlessness. He was a large, cheerful, flapping sort of man, something like a boisterous spring wind. On the very day he became aware of his loss—for he felt at once as if those cherished pieces of property had been stolen away from him—he jammed his hat on his head and strode across the fields to visit Mrs. Elpham.

He had seen her house when he first moved in, almost hidden by huge oaks at that time putting out their first green, nestling in a hollow at the foot of a hill, its slate roof shining as if it were wet. When he came closer to it now, with the thick growth of June all round it, he found it to be a fine old house built of local stone on which moss and lichen grew, its windowframes neatly painted

© 1954 *by Woman's Journal*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

white, its heavy old paneled door polished by wear and age. As he walked up the little flagged path there was a scrambling, and five or six cats leapt away from him and disappeared in the shrubbery.

A tall, slender, black-haired woman answered his knock. She had very dark, wicked eyes, out of which she glitteringly regarded him. Over her neat black dress was an incongruous denim apron, and she carried gardening gloves and a trowel.

"I was just going out," she said. "You must be Mr. Guthrie."

For a moment he was startled. "That's right," he said. "How'd you know?"

"I knew," she replied. Her voice crackled like a starched apron.

"Oh. I see," said Guthrie. "You're Mrs. Elpham?"

She nodded. "Good of you to drop in. You've bought the Wilsons' h'mm? Won't you come into the garden?"

She went past him and he had to follow her. She knelt before a bed of young plants and began loosening the soil around them. Guthrie stood awkwardly behind her, shifting from foot to foot, his hands deep in his pockets, wondering how she had known him. A lucky guess, he decided.

"Well, Mr. Guthrie, how do you like it here?" she asked, in that dry, ironic voice.

"Very much," he said. "Very much indeed. Listen—er—Mrs. Elpham. I want to buy your meadow."

It was exactly what he had meant to say, but he had been planning a much more suave and roundabout approach. Now it was out, and he plunged ahead.

"I'd like to buy it all. The meadow between us, you know. And the bit of marshland and the wood beyond. It makes my place more complete, I think."

She went on digging. After a moment, without any change in her tone, she said: "I have always admired the Wilsons' house. However it is damp and cold. An ideal breeding place for pneumonia. It's late eighteenth century, you know. It has some splendid features. The chimneys, for instance. And you know about the 'borning room,' of course?"

Guthrie scratched his head. "Look—" he said.

She stabbed the trowel into the dark earth and stood up stiffly. "The 'borning room' is that little room off the study, where there is a deep shelf above the fireplace. The local midwife lived in the house, and when children were born there they were wrapped in swaddling clothes and tucked up on that shelf to keep warm."

"Well, that's very interesting," Guthrie said, with increasing irritation. "Now about the meadow."

"Oh, yes." She wiped her hands together, smiling a little. "You know, Albert Wilson could have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had the meadow, the marsh, and the wood—the whole piece—if he had met my price. I needed money, then. He wanted that land, too. But he wouldn't pay for it. And I said then I'd never sell it. And I won't."

Guthrie began to breathe heavily through the nose. "I'm not Albert Wilson," he said. "I never even met Albert Wilson. That's rather foolish—don't you think?—to refuse to sell to me because you were insulted by him. What's your price?"

"I always keep my word," Mrs. Elpham replied. "I don't consider that rather foolish."

Guthrie took hold of himself and made one last attempt to be businesslike. "Now look here, Mrs. Elpham," he began.

She bridled. "Mr. Guthrie," she snapped. "I don't like being spoken to like that."

"Oh, I'm sorry, dash it. I've set my heart on the meadow, and the rest of it. What earthly use have you got for it? You never take hay out of the meadow, do you?"

"Do you mean to do so?"

Guthrie rubbed his chin angrily. He didn't, as a matter of fact, but he had already determined that this would be a quick and happy meeting, and he was being thwarted. That always made him obstinate.

"Yes," he said.

"I won't sell it to you. I don't want hayrakes and tractors cluttering up my front garden."

"Oh, blast your front garden!" Guthrie yelled, losing his temper altogether. "I'll see my lawyer about this. You have no right to refuse to sell it to me on such a flimsy excuse. The property's worthless! It's pure selfishness, that's what it is—"

"Good day, Mr. Guthrie," Mrs. Elpham said.

"You haven't heard the last of this," he raged, turning to go.

"I like warm and friendly neighbors." she smiled, and smiled in a peculiar way. "You're a cold one. *Be* cold, then."

She turned her back on him and knelt beside the flower bed. Thus dismissed, he slammed furiously out of the gate. He stopped for only one parting shot.

"I am going to rip the fireplace out of that borning room," he snarled. "If that's of any interest to you."

It was that evening that the chill began.

Guthrie invited a couple of friends to come over—an advertising man named Simon, who had first persuaded him to move to Cranmer, and an artist, John Burden, who alternated between surrealism and commercial art. They were sitting in the study with its big windows open to the terrace, and Guthrie was telling them about the borning room. Suddenly he shivered.

"It's cold in here," he said. Then,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

doubtfully, as they shook their heads: "Isn't it?"

"No, not especially," said Simon.

"Some of Mrs. Elpham's frost has settled on you, my friend," Burden chuckled.

"She is an odd character," Simon said, lighting a cigarette. "When we first moved here—that was almost ten years ago—we had a local woman come to clean for us who swore that Mrs. Elpham was a sorcerer."

"Sorceress, old boy," Burden put in. "Some advertising man—doesn't know his grammar."

"It *is* cold," Guthrie said. He got up and closed the windows.

His friends looked at him in alarm. His lips were blue, his large body trembled, and his teeth were chattering.

"Bit of a chill, perhaps," Burden said.

Simon leaned forward. "You ought to go to bed," he said. "Take a stiff drink and a couple of aspirins."

"It certainly isn't as cold as all that in here," said Burden. "Want me to call the doctor?"

"Oh, no," said Guthrie, trying to laugh. "I must be catching a cold. It'll pass off. But I think perhaps I'd better get to bed."

It did not pass off, however, neither the next day nor the next. It was not the sort of chill that accompanies a disease, for it was constant. It might almost have been called an even temperature. It was, however, not external, for under his electric blanket and with a cricket sweater over his winter pyjamas Guthrie still shivered. He called the doctor at last, but there did not seem to be anything the matter: the thermometer registered 98.6 degrees, his pulse was normal, and his appetite even better than usual.

He discovered, after desperately trying everything, that sitting under his sun lamp helped a little. He did not dare expose himself to the ultraviolet for too long periods, but for at least an hour every day he had some slight relief which helped him get through the rest of the time. Even his dreams were all of icebergs and igloos.

Burden, who worked at home in his own studio, dropped in one afternoon to find out how he was.

"Perhaps," said the artist, "it's an obscure Oriental plague. I shouldn't be visiting you; I'll catch it."

Guthrie, reclining in an easy chair under the sun lamp, forced a grin. "I ought to try rolling myself up on that fireplace shelf in the borning room," he said.

"Oh, yes, speaking of that," said Burden, twisting his moustache between long, wiry fingers. "You know, I found out that this house used to belong to Mrs. Elpham's family, some hundred and thirty years ago. Did you know that?"

"No."

"Then they lost their money and the great-grandfather, I think it was, sold the house. A few years

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ago Albert Wilson, who used to own it before you did, wanted to buy that meadow you were telling us about. Mrs. E. offered to sell it to him if he'd exchange this house for the cottage she's living in now. He turned her down, of course."

"I knew part of that," said Guthrie. "She didn't tell me all of it though. Hm. What—what happened to Wilson, John?"

"He died suddenly," the artist said. He narrowed his eyes. "I know what you're thinking. But anybody could die suddenly."

"Oh, of course."

"Still," said Burden, getting up, "if it was me, I'd run over and apologize to Mrs. E. In fact, I know if I were in your shoes, I'd offer to exchange houses with her. I always liked that cottage, anyhow," he mused.

"But I like this house," Guthrie protested. "And it was a terrific bargain, too."

"Listen," Burden said. "I am the most superstitious man in the world. I am a modern man, and I like the modern world. But I believe wholeheartedly in monstrous things that nobody else believes in. The human mind is capable of anything. Anything at all. All you have to do is listen to the dreams people have. That's why I'm never surprised at anything. Guthrie—why don't you let her have this house? You can come and live with me, if you like."

Guthrie snorted, and waved to his friend. "Don't be silly. How about some poker tonight?"

Burden shook his head, and went home. Guthrie finished his hour under the sun lamp, got up, put on his winter overcoat and a muffler, and cursing himself every step of the way walked across the fields to Mrs. Elpham's house.

Mrs. Elpham's door was open to the breeze, and from within came the sound of singing: a clear, brittle soprano, accompanied by the rattle of saucepans. Guthrie rapped on the door-frame. The singing stopped, and Mrs. Elpham called: "Who is it?"

Guthrie cleared his throat. "It's me," he said. "Mr. Guthrie. Can I come in?"

"Come in, come in."

He stepped into the sitting room and stood for a moment, blinking until his eyes were adjusted to the dimness. It was a snug little place, twinkling with brass, crowded with well-polished old oak furniture. There was a low-beamed ceiling and a large fireplace. Framed prints hung on the walls, and Guthrie looked more closely at one, and recoiled—they were hardly what he had expected to find, for they were reproductions of Goya's "Caprices" full of madwomen, monsters, and witches.

Mrs. Elpham was in the kitchen, and she smiled quite amiably at him as he came to the door. "Please excuse me," she said. "I'm in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

midst of bread-baking. I prefer to bake my own bread." She looked him over. "Don't tell me it's cold out. You're wearing an overcoat!"

"Oh, yes," he said. "I mean, it isn't cold. I seem to have a—a sort of ague. Something I picked up a couple of nights ago."

"Dear me, what a shame." She lifted a copper saucepan off the stove and poured scalded milk out of it into a bowl. "How are you finding it in the Wilson house? Damp and cold, I suppose—I mean, judging by your illness."

"I like the house," he said defiantly. "I came over because I—I wanted to apologize if I seemed rude last time I was here." It cost him an effort to say it.

She picked up a wooden spoon and shook it at him. Except for those lustrous and wicked eyes, she looked like a respectable schoolmarm.

She said: "Not at all, Mr. Guthrie. I think I can understand how you must have felt."

"Yes," he said. "Ah . . . then will you reconsider? About the meadow, I mean. I walked across there just now. It's very pretty."

She smiled, a thin smile, which vanished quickly. "You're a persistent man, aren't you?" she said.

She looked about the table as if searching for something, and Guthrie moved a little closer to the stove for his bones were sodden with cold.

"Drat!" she said. "Eggs."

"I am persistent," he answered, trying to chuckle, but only wheezing. "I—listen, Mrs. Elpham, I wouldn't take any hay out of that field."

"Then what would you want it for?" she said shortly. She went to the refrigerator and opened it and took out two large eggs.

"Well, because it's so—" Guthrie began, and the words died on his lips. In the moment when the refrigerator door had been open, he had caught a glimpse of something that stopped him.

"Pretty, I suppose," Mrs. Elpham said, with sarcasm, going back to her mixing bowl. "I'm glad you find Cranmer so attractive." She looked up. "Oh, are you going? So soon? Why, we had hardly begun our chat."

She stared at him, eyebrows raised. He backed to the kitchen door muttering excuses, and left the house without another coherent word.

All the way home he thought about the thing he had seen in the refrigerator. He found it difficult to refocus it in his mind, refusing so hard to believe that it was so. But it swam up at last, clear and sharp in his mental vision: a wax image, like a little doll, on the top shelf of the refrigerator, next to the freezing compartment.

"But it's nonsense, nonsense," he growled to himself. "People don't do such things nowadays."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Oh, don't they? said another part of his mind. Wasn't there a "witchcraft murder" not so very long ago?

But it's unscientific, damn it!

Certainly. But what about the chill? Curious, in warm, dry, pleasant weather to come down with a malarial chill that never ended. Just the sort of chill you'd get if you spent twenty-four hours sitting next to the freezing compartment of a well-regulated refrigerator.

"But why? What have I ever done to her?" he moaned, hugging his overcoat about his burly chest.

"I'll bet she wants my house. That's what it is. She's trying to drive me out. It couldn't be just annoyance because I'm persistent."

Or could it?

"It doesn't matter," he said, between his teeth. "She won't get the house. She won't get anything."

He stormed inside, when he got home, and threw himself down in the armchair, switched on the sun lamp, and began to plot.

It would obviously do no good to steal the wax image . . . that is, assuming that the thing was really responsible for his chill. Which was ridiculous on the face of it. Nevertheless, assume that it was so for the sake of argument. Steal it? She would only make another.

The thing to do, it came to him in a flash, was to put the refrigerator out of action. Not smash it, but wreck it deviously and slyly. He jumped up, and began pacing to and fro, snapping his fingers and chuckling lightheartedly for the first time in days.

He put his plan into effect that very night. His headstrong stubbornness buoyed him up; it was, after all, no casual matter breaking into a neighbor's house, and a witch's house at that. What if she had some dreadful nightwatchman . . . something not of this world at all?

But there were only cats. They came and rubbed against his legs, miaowing for milk, as he worked by the light of a tiny pocket torch, jumping at every noise, imagining a thousand dialogues—each more awful than the last—if Mrs. Elpham should wake and find him there. Like Guthrie, like almost all country dwellers, she did not lock her windows, and it had been a simple matter for him to slip into the kitchen. It was well past midnight, and there was no moon. When he had opened the refrigerator door a light had sprung on inside the box; he pushed the automatic switch and it went off again. He held his small torch between his teeth, and worked with a screwdriver at the thermostat.

From time to time he glanced up. The image was there, propped against a bottle of milk. There were tiny beads of moisture on it, and the wax seemed brittle and hard. What if it fell and broke? Would he likewise fracture instantly into bits? He sighed, and swore, and felt sorry for himself, but he did

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not dare touch it, not even to make its perch a little more secure.

It was a simple job to remove a bolt, so that the thermostat remained on "defrost." He replaced the cover, clicked the automatic light switch, and very softly closed the refrigerator door. He went out as he had entered, with the cats' gleaming eyes watching him. As he went home over the wet fields, he fancied he felt warmer already.

By morning, it was no fancy. He felt quite normal. Every trace of the bitter chill was gone. He sprang out of bed laughing, and went to stand by the window so that the light breeze could play on him.

"One for my side, Mrs. E.!" he shouted exuberantly, beating his chest with his fists.

He turned the cold water on full force and leapt into the bath.

It was a glorious day. He basked in the sun, smoking and singing to himself in a pleasant baritone. He worked a bit in the garden, enjoying the sweat that rolled down his sides, and the luxurious heat that washed round him, and the delicious touch of wind that dried him when he stopped to rest. He went to bed feeling very contented with himself and life in the country.

But the following afternoon he had two unpleasant surprises. At two o'clock as he was lying in a hammock reading a mystery story, the cold fell upon him again. It fell with redoubled force, viciously, swiftly, and vindictively so that he could imagine Mrs. Elpham turning the thermostatic control as high as it would go. He fell out of the hammock with a moan and staggered into the house. He dragged out the sun lamp, almost weeping, and pulled on a sweater and his overcoat. He had not yet turned on the lamp when his housekeeper came in and told him there was a lady to see him.

"It's Mrs. Elpham from across the way," the housekeeper said. "Got the ague again, Mr. Guthrie? Shall I heat up some water for the hot water bottle?"

"Yes," said Guthrie, "and send her away. No, never mind; tell her to come in."

Perhaps, he thought, if she sees me in this pitiful condition she'll relent.

But she came in with a firm, unyielding tread, and seated herself without a by-your-leave in the armchair. She fixed Guthrie with her bright eyes as if she were regarding an ameba through a microscope. Then she glanced round the room.

"Hm!" she snorted. "Claptrappy modern furniture. I might have guessed it."

"Now wait a minute, Mrs. Elpham," Guthrie began, stung.

"You, Mr. Guthrie," she interrupted, turning her gaze back to him, "broke into my house the night before last."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He stood before her like a big schoolboy called to account. Somebody squealed, he said to himself. Those cats!

"I would like you to remember," she went on, "that there are repairmen working for the refrigerator companies. I also wish to tell you that I will tolerate no more housebreaking. Is that clear?"

Still he said nothing.

She dropped her voice almost to a purr. "I will not sell my meadow, as I told you," she said. "But I will exchange it with you for this house. And three thousand pounds. We'll call that a sale price for my house, so that you'll have somewhere to live."

He was too depressed to do more than gape at her.

"We can come to terms, I think," the gentle voice continued. "I'll give you a day or so to consider it. That's all, Mr. Guthrie. Good afternoon."

She stood up abruptly, and banged her head on the rim of the sun lamp, which overhung the easy chair. "Ow!" she said. Then she controlled herself. "Modern furniture," she said, contemptuously.

When she had gone, Guthrie tottered over to the armchair. He patted the shade of the sun lamp, murmuring: "Good old boy, you did well." Then he turned it on and huddled under it, breathing on his fingers.

The idea of giving up his house to her was repugnant in the extreme. She had chosen such an unfair, such a palpably unethical way of getting it that he determined never to give it up to her.

"I'll die first," he said dramatically, meaning it. "But heavens, I can't stand this cold any more," he added, groaning.

The phone rang and he went to answer it. It was Burden, asking how he felt.

"Great," he said. "Listen, John, it's a good thing you rang. I want to talk to you. Can you come over?"

Burden said he was working.

And on the spur of the moment, Guthrie had an idea. "John," he said, "do you know of any houses for sale round here?"

Burden said he knew of two or three, very nice ones, but why—?

"Never mind. I'm coming over to see you, now."

His search lasted until dinner time, and there was something wrong with every house he looked at. Dejectedly, he drove his car into the garage and sat in it sleepily for a moment or so. And he suddenly became aware that he was no longer cold—had not been cold, in fact, for many minutes.

He sprang from the car and stood hesitantly waiting for the chill to return. He walked from the garage up to the house, throwing off his coat, peeling off his sweater, the low slanting sun warming his face.

"Perhaps Mrs. E.'s dropped

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dead," he thought joyously. "Or perhaps her house has burnt down, and the refrigerator with it."

But neither of those things had happened, evidently, for as he climbed the wide stone steps to his front door, she came hurrying towards him across the lawn. She was a different woman. No longer smoothly pinned up, her hair hung in limp strands down the sides of her face. She carried a towel in one hand, and Guthrie was baffled to see that her face was brick red and that huge beads of sweat stood out like oil on her forehead and rolled sluggishly down her cheeks.

"Mr. Guthrie!" she cried, and her voice broke. "Mr. Guthrie, wait!"

She came up panting.

"Mrs. Elpham," he said, "what's happened?"

She mopped her face and neck with the towel, panting. "I submit," she said, in a flat, toneless voice.

"What do you mean?" said Guthrie.

"I give up. I—I can't stand it." And now there was a pitiable, humble note in her voice, and the dark eyes were full of tears. Guthrie found himself thinking, with astonishment, that she wasn't formidable at all; in fact, he wanted to put his arm round her and comfort her.

"Goodness!" he said, in utter amazement.

"It was only that I wanted this house so badly," she said. "It was mine, once. I played here as a girl. I was very happy here. I have nothing else, now. And you have been so—" She choked, and in a lower tone, said, "—so pleasant. Even though I was so unkind."

Guthrie rubbed his forehead. "But I don't understand," he said.

"I'm sorry about the shivers. I give up. You will stop, now, won't you? Can't we call it quits and—and be friends?"

"Friends?" said Guthrie. "Of course. But stop what?"

She burst into tears, burying her face in the towel. "Oh," she wept, "I—I know I deserve it, but you—you needn't be so—"

She turned away abruptly and without another word walked to the gate in the hedge, which led out to the meadow. Guthrie shook himself. In the midst of his confusion he found himself struggling against an odd impulse to go after her. Instead, he went into the house and threw his coat and sweater and hat in a corner.

"She's trying another game," he said. "Ensnaring me. Not," he added, reflectively, "that I don't prefer it to the other."

He shoved his hands in his pockets and went into the sitting room. He stopped short, peering with a pushed-out lower lip at what he saw.

When Burden had rung him up, he had gone to the phone without stopping to turn off the sun lamp. It was still on, shining brightly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He walked over to it, pulling his hands out of his pockets. From the rim of the shade, where Mrs. Elpham had bumped her head, hung two long, glistening black hairs, caught fast in the seam of the metal and curling in the heat.

"So now I'm a witch," Guthrie said. He began to laugh, and then all at once he didn't feel like laughing any more. He plucked loose the two hairs and wound them absently round his finger. He could imagine clearly the reaction in the cottage across the fields: the instant cessation of the dreadful heat, the cooling of the parched skin, the delicious evening breeze.

"Hm," he said. "Perhaps we can come to some agreement after all."

He retrieved his hat and put it on. Then he took it off, and standing before the hall mirror he carefully combed his thinning hair. He started for the door, caught himself, and went to the desk. He took out an envelope and tucked the two black hairs into it, locking them in the desk drawer. Then, clapping on his hat with a jaunty air, he started across the fields.

"After all," he said to himself, "you can ever tell when you might need ammunition."

At precisely that moment, and with almost the same words, Mrs. Elpham, with recovered coolness, was packing away the wax image.

Coming Next Month

The major feature of our next issue, on the stands in late September, will of course be the exciting and surprising second installment of Robert A. Heinlein's THE DOOR INTO SUMMER; but it'll be worthily backed by a number of shorter items: a hilarious transcript of a Galactic courtroom scene by Gordon R. Dickson; more stories (all new this time) by Idris Seabright and others; an article by G. Harry Stine ("Lee Correy") drawing on his firsthand knowledge of rocket engineering for an account of some classic rocket goofs; and a unique fictional collaboration, in which Isaac Asimov, Theodore R. Cogswell and Miriam Allen deFord take the same set of highly tricky plot devices and come up with three completely different stories, all delightful.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Recommended Reading

by ANTHONY BOUCHER

THIS IS, I TRUST, THE LAST OCCASION that F&SF will have to mention Bridey Murphy (save when our poor Mr. Beaumont has to review the threatened film version of her "life").

Bridey's star seems definitely on the wane. After a steady decline starting in May, she finally, on July 29, slipped off the bestseller list. A brilliant job of collaborative research by the Rev. Wally White, pastor of the Chicago Gospel Tabernacle, and the city staff of the Chicago *American* (published in various Hearst newspapers in late May and early June) proved conclusively what any psychologist suspected from the start: that every "significant" detail in Bridey's story could be traced to the childhood memories of Virginia Tighe, the hypnotic subject known in the book as "Ruth Simmons."

Now what should be the *coup de grâce,* if any is needed, comes in A SCIENTIFIC REPORT ON "THE SEARCH FOR BRIDEY MURPHY," edited by Milton V. Kline (Julian, $3.50*).

Here six psychiatrists and psychologists, all members of the Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, establish clearly that THE SEARCH is "an inept and oversimplified attempt to deal with highly complex aspects of mental functioning"; that multiple personalities are almost a commonplace in hypnosis (and usually much more interesting than Virginia-Ruth-Bridey); that hypnosis by amateurs is an exceedingly perilous practice; that Morey Bernstein's hypnotic techniques were incompetent and dangerous; and most important, that Mr. Bernstein is flatly wrong in his loud assertions that science is neglecting the possibilities of hypnosis. The book is welcome not merely for its demolition of this particular "hypnotizzy," but for its succinct and readable summation of the most recent scientific developments in modern hypnosis.

"The popularity of [Bridey]," observes F. L. Marcuse, one of the contributors to A SCIENTIFIC REPORT, "seems to reflect the fact that, even in our modern and presumably enlightened times, the veneer of scientific thought is still very thin." So do too many other recent books; and it's curious that those which are most outspoken in their attacks upon the Vested Interests of Organized Orthodox Science still rely upon purported "scientific" data and spurious "scientific" method to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

establish the validity of their own outrageous theories. Another contributor, Margaretta K. Bowers, analyzes this in Morey Bernstein's case as "the unstated conflict between the desire to identify with authority figures, all of whom are psychologically related to the father, and the simultaneous desire to overpower and reject these figures"; and this psychoanalytic interpretation may hint at a truth of wider application. Certainly this "unstated conflict" is evident in a large batch of recent books.

The gentle fuzzy-mindedness of Eric J. Dingwall and John Langdon-Davies is apparent in the very title of their THE UNKNOWN—IS IT NEARER? (Signet, 35¢), a query which seems to me somewhat less meaningful than "How high is up?" These two English scholars are earnest and not unintelligent men who have studied extensively in the field of psi phenomena, and who present a good deal of interesting material, if rather too sketchily to carry much conviction, along with some sound advice on the evidential recording of one's own paranormal experiences. But despite their best scholarly intentions, the will to believe keeps showing through, in the acceptance of inadequate evidence, in the misinterpretation of mathematical odds (I still want to read an article on the Rhine experiments by a professional gambler), and in carelessly fallacious reasoning.

R. DeWitt Miller, like W. S. Gilbert's House of Peers, makes no pretence to intellectual eminence or scholarship sublime. He simply accepts anything ever printed, from Bridey to the Angels of Mons (how do these credulous omnivores always happen to read only the original assertion, and never the later exposure?); and in YOU DO TAKE IT WITH YOU (Citadel, $3.50*) he weaves Borley Rectory and Eusapia Palladino and flying saucers and Rhine and Fort into a picture of a solidly corporeal afterlife in which, among other advantages, sex (presumably the IT of the title) is better than ever.

Saucer books have been appearing at the rate of one a month so far this year; and surprisingly, several of them are, in odd ways, interesting.

Aimé Michel's THE TRUTH ABOUT FLYING SAUCERS (Criterion, $3.95*) was published in Paris two years ago as LUEURS SUR LES SOUCOUPES VOLANTES (GLINTS OF LIGHT ON THE F. S.), a more modest and fitting title. The first half of the book is pointless for American readers, being merely a recap for the French of familiar American accounts; but material on French and other European sightings is fresh to us, and includes a few seemingly impressive cases. I am, I confess, unable to evaluate or even to understand the "cosmic energy" theory of Lieut. Plantier of the French Air Force, which M. Michel feels may

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

explain everything about saucers; but I must praise an excellent appendix on interplanetary theology by Father Francis J. Connell of the Catholic University of America.

Michel is the only recent representative of what passes among saucerites for conservative skepticism. Gray Barker is an out-and-out saucer fan, who is also a Shaverite and inclined to suspect that deros may be Behind It All. He's also, however, a lively and entertaining writer; and though you may not believe a word of the thesis of THEY KNEW TOO MUCH ABOUT FLYING SAUCERS (University Books, $3.50*)—which is that three men in black suits go around hushing up saucer researchers by telling them The Truth and pledging them to secrecy—you'll find it a fascinating picture of life in the inner circles of intense saucer devotees.

M. K. Jessup's THE UFO ANNUAL (Citadel, $4.95*) is an abominable book which you shouldn't miss. Mr. Jessup's utter inability to think clearly, to analyze evidence, or to write English prose is in itself a phenomenon of some paranormal interest. Nevertheless, he has performed a most valuable service to all science-fantasy readers (and particularly writers) in amassing this large (135,000 words) scrapbook of undigested Forteana—newspaper clippings and personal narratives, not only of Unidentified Flying Objects, but of every sort of inexplicable, unorthodox oddity belonging in the Book of the Damned. It's an annual to whose future volumes I look forward eagerly—and with the hope that later issues will provide an index.

Such an annual is needed, says Mr. Jessup, "because . . . the Press seems unable—or unwilling—to separate fact from fiction or hoax." Later he states, "Published late in the year, but evidently an event which took place much earlier, though certainly in 1955, the following eerie incident was reported in David Grinnell's column. It is reported as sober fact, and we pass it along to you as possible evidence."

There follows, on pp. 352-354, the complete text of the short story *Top Secret,* by Mr. Grinnell (who has no column anywhere), which was published in *Sir!* in 1948 and reprinted in F&SF in 1950. (Don't ask me how this could happen! I politely called the fact to Mr. Jessup's attention two months ago, but have received no reply.)

Jessup's second book of the year (with at least one other about to come out) is UFO AND THE BIBLE (Citadel, $2.50*). This is about how these are the Latter Days of Biblical prophecy and Jesus was a saucer-visitant, and I don't think the Holy Name Society will blame me too much if I simply repeat, in awe, *Jesus. . . .*

Roundup of reprints: Best buy in hardcovers for s.f. lovers is the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

surprisingly cheap reissue of the fine tales of BULLARD OF THE SPACE PATROL (World, $1*) by Malcolm Jameson, most underrated of the writers of *Astounding*'s Golden Age. John Beecroft's two-volume KIPLING: A SELECTION (Doubleday, $5.95*) is another startling bargain: over half a million words, including (along with much non-fantasy) the complete PUCK OF POOK'S HILL and THE JUNGLE BOOK, the nearly complete JUST SO STORIES, and many of Kipling's fantasy short stories (if not all of the best; I find the omission of *"Wireless"* unbelievable). Msgr. Robert Hugh Benson's LORD OF THE WORLD (Dodd, Mead, $3*) is a strange and neglected novel; first published in 1907, it is a pioneer specimen of theological future fiction, awkward yet powerful, with suggestions of both M. P. Shiel and Charles Williams. And for logical satiric wit in extrapolation, don't miss H. Allen Smith's THE AGE OF THE TAIL (Grosset & Dunlap, $1.49*).

In paperbacks you have a happy assortment of masterpieces. Your library is assuredly incomplete without C. S. Lewis' OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET (Avon, 35¢), George Orwell's ANIMAL FARM (Signet, 25¢) and 1984 (Signet, 35¢), or Lewis Padgett's THE FAIRY CHESSMEN, now retitled CHESSBOARD PLANET (Galaxy, 35¢). And you'll find few more distinguished (and enjoyable) collections of short stories than Isaac Asimov's I, ROBOT (Signet, 35¢), Ray Bradbury's THE OCTOBER COUNTRY (Ballantine, 50¢), Fredric Brown's ANGELS AND SPACESHIPS, now retitled STAR SHINE (Bantam, 25¢), and Theodore Sturgeon's A WAY HOME (Pyramid, 35¢, including 9 of the original 11 stories). And you can round off the fiction with a bit of speculative fact (on quite a different level from the "fact" books above) in H. Spencer Jones's recently expanded LIFE ON OTHER WORLDS (Mentor, 50¢).

Among mysteries, fantasy collectors should note that Leslie Charteris' THE SAINT—THE HAPPY HIGHWAYMAN (Avon, 25¢) includes the amusing Mad-Scientist adventure of *The Man Who Liked Ants,* and that Margery Allingham's early, foolish and entertaining thriller, LOOK TO THE LADY (Penguin, 65¢), first published in this country in 1931 as THE GYRTH CHALICE MYSTERY, contains a supernatural element which is *not* dispelled by the detection of the high-born gentleman known as Mr. Albert Campion.

---

*Books marked with an asterisk may be ordered through F&SF's Readers' Book Service. For details, see p. 2.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One might have thought that Groff Conklin's excellent anthology INVADERS OF EARTH *completely covered its subject, and nothing remained to be said. But leave it to the infinitely unpredictable Winona McClintic to come up with what is assuredly the zaniest incursion yet in the annals of Invasion from Outer Space.*

Tea from Chirop Terra

by WINONA McCLINTIC

IT WAS A GOOD THING THAT THE Invasion from Outer Space was first made manifest to an habitué of the highest level of society; otherwise, world-wide panic might have resulted. But, as these members of the financial nobility think it vulgar to display emotion, the Invasion was passed off as merely a tea-smuggle of J. Alfred Pr——, a young man hitherto regarded as the acme of dullness and propriety. Of course, the disappearance of Miss Gogo Duplisse, the society editor of the most influential newspaper in the city, caused some interest in her small circle, notably that of her third husband, who offered to come in and beat the ears off Old Ironpants, her employer, unless he was told "the name of the gigolo with whom she had gone off with." As we shall find out, however, this slur upon the good name of Gogo Duplisse was uncalled for, and she remained uncalled for from then on, as her third husband sailed off to Tahiti and ate coconuts and never got over it. Love lays some husbands low.

The Invasion happened chiefly to J. Alfred, who did not read science fiction, but who had heard that the world of science was buzzing with the news that life existed in other galaxies. Everyone knew that an attack from other planets was merely a matter of time. Our scientists of Earth were racing against this aforementioned time, hoping to perfect rockets, and whatnot, so that we, of Earth, could fling ourselves into Deep Space, like gigantic birds, and thus be one up on the Things from Outer Space, who were going to conquer us and make us prisoners of their beastly culture and militaristic dictatorship. Would Earth be first in the race? That was the question which puzzled our statesmen and any other men of good will who ever thought about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Outer Space. J. Alfred was not one of these — he was only a tea-drinker — but he had heard the subject mentioned.

The translation of J. Alfred, whilst not anticipated, was accorded genteel acceptance in houses which knew him best. It was an oft-stated opinion (of Miss Gogo Duplisse *et al.*) that he was getting more unbearable. For J. Alfred, middle age set in early; he had just rounded thirty when he took to wearing flannel next his skin and going to bed early. He was engaged as a vice-president, or something, of a financial establishment, or the like. A vice-president is stiff and proper with the minor employees and jovial in a ghastly way with equals. Yet this young man did not stoop to flattery of his superiors in the tiny world of Big Business. On the contrary, he maintained a dignified self-respect; he escorted lovely young daughters to social functions and to the dress circle at the opera house and, afterward, to respectable establishments, where one dines on squab and lobster humidor and imported champagne, or whatever the foodstuffs might be which these scions and debutante "buds" consume to support a life of culture and well-bred gaiety. The chief problem in this butterfly existence is "whether the tea is fit to drink."

The flaw which haunted the character of J. Alfred was neither vulgar "climbing" nor the bestial pursuit of secret vice. It was rather a lack of interest in sin and sensual excitement. The young ladies complained to their papas that J. Alfred was dull and pompous. He kissed them goodnight on the doorstep, uneasily aware that behind the polished doorknob lurked a butler eager to admit his young mistress to her dwelling place. J. Alfred removed his hat for this solemn occasion. He kissed coolly, yet urffirmly, twiddling his lips like P. Rabbit. If he had had a moustache, Clarissa Harlowe confessed to her father, she would have been taken of a fit. Miss Gogo Duplisse could not stomach him, although she had to chat with him at intermission and at social gatherings involving tea. She was quoted as having told Old Ironpants that she "would not give one jot or tittle for that twerp." Her editor was a connoisseur of jots and tittles as well as a lay psychologist; he concluded that J. Alfred had rejected Gogo over the teapot.

However, it was the heart of Clarissa Harlowe which began to quail. J. Alfred had begun behaving weirdly in her presence, and, she believed, this indicated that he had begun a courtship which could end only in tragedy and marriage. She noticed the worst sign at a tea party given by Madame Merryman, a hattress of distinction. J. Alfred, holding a plate of those little gooey sandwiches without tops which taste like Turkish library-paste, had advanced upon Clarissa like a squirrel upon a peanut.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I have measured out my life in coffee spoons," J. Alfred remarked to Miss Harlowe in a voice fraught with meaning.

"Do tell," replied the young female in an absent way. Her eyes roamed the room in search of a polo-player of whom she was enamoured. Riccardo could tango like an angel, Clarissa told her little sister, Bessie, in a burst of girlish confiding. Neither Bessie nor Gogo Duplisse cared about tangos, although they realized the importance of this grace to a maiden of Clarissa's parts.

Clarissa, with an effort, brought her thoughts back to actuality, where J. Alfred stood before her, sipping tea through pursed lips and conversing, evidently.

"What did you say, love?" murmured Clarissa, dipping her classic profile into her own beverage.

"Do I dare to eat a peach?" inquired J. Alfred.

Clarissa frowned. What did the man mean? What kind of a crack was that which she had just heard?

"Horticology," she ventured, adjusting an earring.

"Beg pardon?" asked J. Alfred, bending forward with insidious charm like a bee with concupiscent intent.

"You're not my dish of tea, love," said Clarissa, attempting to move away and lose herself in the crowd of celebrants. Suddenly, something got into J. Alfred. Seizing the young lady by her clavicle, he forced her into the conservatory and made passionate love to her behind a potted palm. Clarissa was at heart composed of fire and ice. She bashed him over the cranium with an African violet and left him for dead among the flowering plants and shrubs. J. Alfred, upon coming to (as the sporty element would say), slunk out of that tea party like a discredited tomcat. He was ashamed of himself. Men are, from time to time, inclined to tardy repentance for exhibitions of bestial coveting.

"I shall walk upon the beach," J. Alfred remarked to his hostess, bidding her adieu. "I have heard the mermaids singing each to each." He recovered his expensive hat, which the hattress eyed with restrained approval, and exited.

And he did walk upon the beach. This was the place where he encountered the object from Outer Space. It was not a saucer — it was a rectangle — but it was, truly, an unidentified flying object. It flew down and lit upon the sands directly before the love-lorn wanderer. A little door opened in the side, and out hopped some Things with folded black wings, mouse snouts, and claws. They looked like bats and were the size of human children in the fifth grade. The Things spoke English with a quaint inflection and were exceedingly polite. Visitors to our shores are frequently very much more polite than the natives one runs across in the same atmosphere.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Welcome to Earth, Little Things from Outer Space," said J. Alfred.

"Greetings from Chirop Terra," said the foremost Thing, who was wearing a military belt and captain's insignia and naught else save his velvety fur.

"What does it all mean?" cried J. Alfred, slapping his hams in query.

"That is what we have come to find out," remarked the captain with an engaging smile. "Guess my name."

"Is it Dracula?" asked J. Alfred.

"No, it is not," said the furry stranger, lighting a cheroot.

"Is it Doctor Falke?" asked J. Alfred, seating himself upon a picturesque piece of driftwood.

"Who was Doctor Falke?" inquired a small voice just behind the captain.

"Why, he was a very interesting notary who had an office on the floor below me," explained J. Alfred. "He used to go to parties dressed as a bat. He was known to local society editors as 'the flittermouse.'"

"What is a 'flittermouse,' if you please?" asked the same small creature.

"That is what you are," said J. Alfred. "A mouse that flitters."

The Things put their forepaws over their sharp little mouths and tittered as if they had never flittered in their lives.

"Other places, other customs," said the captain, looking up a word in a phrase-book of the English. "My name is Rumpelstiltskin."

J. Alfred looked wise. "That just won't wash," he said. "Too obvious."

"You know the name?" the captain was surprised.

"Very common," said J. Alfred. "Something like Gnorr or Wmpfl or Bzxrr or Rnqll is what we earthlings expect Beings from Outer Space to be named. Or, possibly, Charliebrown."

"You may call me Charliebrown, then," said the captain.

"I'll be Wmpfl, I am Bzxrr, you're Rnqll, ha ha!" shouted the little members of the crew.

J. Alfred was enchanted. He invited everyone up to his apartment for a nightcap. The captain declined politely, saying that they had to make the ship batshape.

"However, pay us another call tomorrow morning," suggested Captain Charliebrown. "Bring a guest, if you like."

"Might need a witness at that," agreed J. Alfred. "Goodnight, all." He went home and called Miss Gogo Duplisse on the telephone. Being awakened from her beauty sleep, she was hideous with gleep all over her face and a chin-strap, but, of course, the young man could not see her.

"Hello, darling," he shouted.

"Who is this, darling?" a frigid voice demanded.

"It's me, darling," cried J. Alfred.

"I know that already, darling." The voice turned to ice. "Have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you a name, darling? Have you eloped or something? Or poisoned your grandmother? If not, call me tomorrow, darling. I can borrow a gun from my third husband." The connection was cut off by an incompetent operator.

Clicking his teeth in annoyance, J. Alfred rang the number again.

"They're here!" he yelled into Gogo's weary ear. "The Invaders from Space!"

"What do I care, darling?" asked the sleep-stricken "sob-sister." This was why she sobbed. She was going to a function in an old-world rose garden the following afternoon, and she had to lose the haggard look.

Gogo Duplisse was the only writer of news to whom J. Alfred had been introduced. But the people must be told! J. Alfred began calling right and left. Among the people whom he bored with his account of the Invasion were: Clarissa Harlowe, General Smee of the Sixth-and-¼ Corps Area, the Mayor's secretary, the principal of Union High School, and J. Alfred's old Aunt Mary, who lived on a salad ranch in the valley. Running out of numbers, he called Clarissa again; the phone was answered by her little sister, Bessie, who liked J. Alfred because he was staid and serious and did not put ketchup on his eggs.

"What do they look like?" asked Bessie kindly.

"Bats!" replied J. Alfred smugly, his duty done. He felt like that horse that carried the good news in those two French places; it drank, too.

"Will you come calling with me in the morning?" invited the midnight conversationalist.

"I should love to," answered little golden-haired Bessie. "What will be the uniform of the day?"

"Informal sportsclothing," said J. Alfred. "It's a small craft and the bats are very friendly."

At sunrise, little Bessie, who was seventeen and very intellectual for her set, was knocking on J. Alfred's door. His man, who came by the day, let her in, not without an involuntary gasp of astonishment at the sight of her fresh beauty, for most ladies of society look like hand-carved goddesses from the Matto Grosso at this hour of the day. J. Alfred did not look well himself, but he showered, muttering "a sound mind in a sound body" to keep his spirits up, swallowed several cups of coffee, and was ready for the mission. Little Bessie was wearing short pants, stout walking shoes, and white kid gloves. J. Alfred put on a sweatshirt with "toujours l'amour" printed on the front and a pair of khaki trousers from service days. He carried a walking stick with a gold lion's head on the top.

The flying teatray was just as it had been described to little Bessie. The flittermice were all out on the sundeck, warming their little bellies and passing tea cups around. They rose politely to their hindclaws

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when they saw the visitors approaching. The captain came to the gangway to greet the two.

"Gee whillikers!" gasped little Bessie. The fantastic scene had carried her back to the days of childhood, when she had viewed such Invasions nightly.

"Welcome aboard, gentleman and young lady," said Captain Charliebrown. "Welcome to *The Membrane*."

They walked up the tiny gangway, saluted the ensign and the captain, and took seats at the table. J. Alfred decided to be sly.

"Have you come to the planet, Earth, for scientific purposes?" he asked. The captain looked grave.

"Yes, sir, we have come for 'specimens,'" was his reply. "We cannot Invade a planet until our scholars and thinkers have made themselves familar with the 'natives.' Have you and your golden-haired companion any enemies whom we might 'borrow' for a year or two?"

"They have not declared themselves yet," said J. Alfred, "but should any attack *The Membrane*, you have my permission to capture them." He made this statement because he was confident that the little creatures were quite harmless, in spite of their largeness of thought.

Rnqll fell in love with little Bessie immediately.

"Lemon?" he asked. When she consented, the flittermouse was beside himself, and Wmpfl was on the other side, trying to rival him in courtly grace. Bessie was charmed with her swains, and coquetted prettily. J. Alfred realized that he had never known the "real Bessie" until this moment.

"Would you like to make a flight with us?" asked Captain Charliebrown, when the tea had been consumed.

"Splendid!" cried J. Alfred and little Bessie.

The ship was made ready for the cruise. The gear on the sundeck was stowed away, the tea things were washed and carried below by a steward named Nffth, and the sundeck was lowered into the main body of the ship. Now *The Membrane* looked more like a box and less like a teatray.

"Secure the gangway!" shouted Captain Charliebrown.

"Gangway secured, sir!" answered Bzxrr and Wmpfl. *The Membrane* took off gently and soared through the sky. J. Alfred and little Bessie, gazing enraptured out of peepholes in the ready room, saw the earth below them, lying innocently unaware that the Invasion had begun. Yet the two earthlings had no fear of militaristic enslavement. These gentle animals, or birds, if such they might be, had no grandiose schemes for the conquering of galaxies. As Captain Charliebrown had explained, this was merely a preliminary visit to judge if earthlings were worthy of the high-grade research of Chirop Terra.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Chirop Terra," said the velvety captain, "lies far beyond your sun in another galaxy, many light years away. Far removed from what you call 'civilization,' these intelligent natives, or bats, lead lives of peace and fruitful endeavour."

"It sounds like heaven," sighed little Bessie, who had wearied of the tawdry pleasures of a life of high society and riches. J. Alfred beamed upon her with a new glint in his eyes.

"Bessie!" he cried.

"J. Alfred!" she murmured. They osculated. Captain Charliebrown tiptoed across the ready room and took down a book from the case.

"In my capacity as ship's captain," he announced, "I am ready to pronounce you: earthling and mate."

Bessie nodded aye, a glow of happiness in her round, blue eyes.

"Chitter chitter, mumble mumble, @¼¢ ½$)*%½¢–'–#'& ?" the captain asked J. Alfred.

"I do!" replied J. Alfred with fervent adoration.

The same was asked of Bessie, with the omission of the #'& and the addition of a %&*.

"I do," she whispered in a modest voice.

"I now pronounce you #'& and %&*," cried the captain. All the crew, who had been watching from the hatch, rushed in to begin the party, and a ball was had by all.

Now, while this merriment occurred in the skies, all was not well on earth. Clarissa had suspected that her little sister was about to elope. Good heavens, the child was only seventeen years old! Phoning her tangoing Riccardo and Miss Gogo Duplisse, who dropped her function in the old-world rose garden without a qualm, Clarissa marshalled her forces. She did not tell her papa, for fear that he would out with the old BB gun and make hash of the benedict. The three allies rushed to the beach and saw the teatray take off.

"Alas!" cried Clarissa Harlowe, "the bird is flown!"

"¡Coraje, leetle chica!" uttered Riccardo, dancing a few consoling measures. "Thees lovairs weel raytorn."

"Nuts!" muttered Gogo Duplisse. "Foiled again!" She had hoped to write a full account of the affaire.

"Well, darlings," said Gogo, crossing her silken-shod legs and smoking like a high-school student, "do we wait or do we slink away with our tails between our legs?"

Riccardo gave her an outraged look. He was not very bright, though prestissimo in his footwork. They waited through the warm summer noon, until the teatray came again to rest upon the sands. The hatch was opened, the gangway was lowered, and out trooped the married pair, followed by numerous furry little bodies.

"Holy Teresa," whispered Gogo Duplisse, "Old Ironpants will never believe this one!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"¡Sangre mia!" moaned Riccardo, falling on his face in the sand. The land of Riccardo's nativity was rife with teeming jungles and steaming forest denizens. Among these denizens were bats of the species: *vampira*, and Riccardo had been taught as a chicuelo to fear these creations of angry Madre Natura. Now, the tangoer believed, the vampire bats had come to "get" him for his lies and evasions. What a craven-maker is a guilty conscience!

Clarissa Harlowe was furious.

"Bessie!" she screamed, "come away from those Things! You'll get fleas and we'll never clear them out of the draperies!"

The flittermice were aghast. Was this earth lady serious? Had not fleas been wiped out to a man by the excellent insecticides of earthly science? Miss Gogo Duplisse began scribbling scoops and by-lines in her notebook.

"The bride, who attended Miss Lamb's School and who came out last year at The Cotillion, wore toreador pants designed by Monsieur Omar, and her grandmother, the former Elsie Swat, 's shoes. This romantic elopement, high in the skies above the city that knows how to do things, had the things to do it with this time. These chic Things from Outer Space are all the rage among the Younger Set, and, rumour hath it, are sweeping the country. A little bat told me that no future romance will be complete without one. The benedict, who is a son, wore pants."

(etaoin shrdlu)

Miss Gogo Duplisse was pleased with what she had written. The subject had almost gotten away from her, yet she had covered it.

The flittermice conferred hastily on the gangway. Little Bessie and J. Alfred strolled with the utmost poise over to the dumbfounded sister, the sob-sister, and the sisters' escort, who was still rolling on the sands crying, "¡ay!".

"Another world has been watching us," explained the bridegroom.

"So thrilling," murmured little Bessie, "to be married right in the middle of the Invasion from the Skies!"

"Balls!" shouted Miss Gogo Duplisse.

"Where?" cried Clarissa Harlowe.

"Right behind you!" gulped Gogo, as a disc with swinging nets scooped her up and rolled back to *The Membrane* with her. It was her last scoop. She fainted dead away and a thrombosis set in. Little Bessie picked up the fallen notebook, for she wanted to be sure that her elopement was covered on the society page. Two more discs rolled off with Clarissa, who had no chance, and with Riccardo, who tangoed madly but to no avail.

Little Bessie and J. Alfred strolled back to the batship and protested this kidnapping of relatives and guests.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But, #'& and %&* Pr—," argued the captain, "we must have our specimens! Besides, we are not going to hurt them, just pickle them and study their interesting customs. You told me yourselves that society scions and their ladies are pickled all the time."

"But, what about your Invasion?" asked J. Alfred, mildly surprised. "Are you going to drop all that?"

"Only for this year," answered a serious bat with a magnifying glass in his left claw. "We have a new secret weapon."

"It's a new strategy," shouted little Wmpfl in high glee. "Instead of a sixth or seventh column, we will use a society column!"

"True," admitted Captain Charliebrown, smiling at the youngster's enthusiasm, "that will be our method. And now, friends of Earth, we must bid you farewell and get on with the pickling."

"Will you bring them back to us?" asked little Bessie, who was worried about her papa's reaction to the news that bats had carried off his daughter, Clarissa. She was afraid that he would out with the old BB gun and pepper *The Membrane* like those drakes he always made her eat.

"On our next trip to the planet, Earth," promised the captain, "and, by that time, they will be docile and obedient, one ventures to say."

"Meanwhile," said Rnqll, setting out boxes marked CHIROP TERRA, INC. in the corner, "here is a wedding present to our earthchums."

"Tea," explained Captain Charliebrown. He tiptoed over and whispered in J. Alfred's ear, "My name really *is* Rumpelstiltskin." Then, with a firm, batlike handshake, he strode up the gangway.

"Now, we are going to make the fur fly," announced the leader of the flittermice. "Attention, all claws!"

"Aye, aye, sir," replied the crew, and "jay!" lamented Riccardo in the pantry where he was confined. With machinelike precision, the bats secured the landing-gear and took off. Captain Charliebrown and Wmpfl waved until *The Membrane* was out of sight.

J. Alfred and little Bessie, his bride, walked arm in arm back to town. They sent Mike out with the stationwagon to pick up the boxes of tea, which was pronounced a huge success at all social functions during the following year. In spite of this novel and exotic taste-thrill to titillate their jaded palates, none of the drinkers believed the tale of its acquiring, nor could they swallow the fantastic story of the circumstances in which the wedding was performed. J. Alfred, as a result of his social success and of his glowing pride in his bride, blossomed out as a bon vivant. Little Bessie blossomed also, and became a mother as soon as it was decent. The papa of the two young ladies of this narrative did, indeed, out with the old BB

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gun. He patrolled the sands like Lord Ullin, waiting for the happy day when he could make hash of that gol-danged, tangoing sheikh, who had eloped with his daughter, Clarissa. No one could tell him different. Old Ironpants bore the loss of Miss Gogo Duplisse with equanimity, and hired a fledgling named Knickerbocker to fill her position.

Meanwhile, the specimens were having their troubles on *The Membrane*. They refused to cooperate, and the flittermice knew that steps must be taken. An emotional afternoon solved the disciplinary problem, and quelled the Specimen Mutiny, once and for all. Riccardo, crying, "¡dios!", dumped his tea on the deck.

Captain Charliebrown (Rumpelstiltskin) advanced upon him threateningly with a donkey wrench in his claw.

"Will you have one lump or two?" he inquired suavely.

Riccardo had two.

MILLESIMAL MILESTONE

The world's oldest science fiction club is about to hold its one thousandth meeting. To celebrate this moment of history, the venerable Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society has arranged a special program and invites all fans and authors to congregate at Freehafer Hall, Prince Rupert Apts., 1305 W. Ingraham, downtown L. A., from 7:30 P.M. on Thursday, October 25. (For further details, phone Forrest J. Ackerman, CRestview 4-2762.) F&SF to LASFS: Warm congratulations, and may you still be going strong when we put out (God willing) our thousandth issue, dated September, 2033.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stories by Avram Davidson are lamentably infrequent, wholly unlike each other, and highly to be treasured. If you remember — as I am sure you do — My Boy Friend's Name Is Jello (THE BEST FROM F&SF: FOURTH SERIES) *or* The Golem (FIFTH SERIES), *you know the one certain fact about any Davidson story: that it will be unpredictable, unique and delightful.*

King's Evil

by AVRAM DAVIDSON

WHEN I FIRST SAW THE COPY OF *The Memoirs of Dr. Mainauduc, The Mesmerist* (bound in flaking leather, the spine in shreds, and half the title page missing: which is why I was able to buy it cheap), I assumed it to be a work of fiction. There is something extremely Gothick about "Mainauduc The Mesmerist." It sets one in mind at once of Melmoth The Wanderer. No one today would venture to invent such a name for such a person. (Unless, of course, he were writing for television or the movies, in which case he might venture anything.) But the times bring forth the man, and the man bears the name. Consider, for example, "the Jesuit Hell." This is not a theological conception, it was a man, a Jesuit, whose family name was Hell. Father Hell devised a system or theory of healing based on "metallic magnetism"; he passed it on to Franz Anton Mesmer, who almost at once quarreled with him, produced the counter-theory of "animal magnetism." Mesmer begat (so to speak) D'Eslon, D'Eslon begat Mainauduc. Full of enthusiasm, Mainauduc came to England, and settled in, of all places, Bristol. All this, I admit, sounds most improbable. Truth so often does. Who is not familiar with the bewildered cry of the novice writer, "But that's the way it *happened!*"? Not altogether trusting to my own ability to convince the reader that there really *was* such a person as the Jesuit Hell or such a person as Mainauduc the Mesmerist, I refer him to Mackay's *Extraordinary Popular Delusions And The Madness Of Crowds;* but should he (the reader) not be able to credit that this work exists either, then I must throw up my hands. Mackay, in my opinion, was really too hard

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on "The Magnetisers," as he called them. Himself so great a sceptic, he could have little cause for complaint if other, later, sceptics should not care to believe that any book bearing such a title ever existed. In a way, it would serve him right. . . .

In Bristol, Dr. Mainauduc flourished to the degree that his reputation went on ahead of him to London. In a short time London was coming to him; he cured Dukes of the dropsy and generals of the gout, he magnetized countesses into convulsions and they emerged from them free of the phthysic, while viscountesses left their vapors behind them—or so he says. At any rate he determined upon going to London and setting up practice there. He recounts in detail his plans for setting up something called "the Hygienickal Society . . . for Females of high Position . . . the fee, Fifteen Guineas" at his house in the capital. And he describes, amongst many other cases, one where he cured a long-seated complaint ("pronounced beyond help") entirely by proxy.

It may be that Dr. Mainauduc's success in Bristol was perhaps not quite so dazzling as his memory in later years led him to fancy. He had come up to London, to discuss his setting up practice there, at the invitation of a Mr. Wentworth, "a Bachelor of Physick," who lived in Rosemary Lane; and despite its pretty name, Rosemary Lane was not located in a pretty district. We might consider it a depressed area. And Mr. Wentworth had arranged to meet him, not in his own quarters, but at an inn called the Mulberry Tree, where they were to dine. Mr. Wentworth had made the necessary arrangements, but Mr. Wentworth was late.

"Dr. Mainauduc? To meet Mr. Wentworth? Certainly, sir," the waiter said. "If the Doctor will only please to step in here, Mr. Wentworth will be along presently." And he led him along to a medium-sized room, with paneled walls, and a fire which seemed to beckon pleasantly from the grate, for it was the first of October, and the air was chill. He had scarcely had the time to give his full attention to the flames licking greedily at the greasy black slabs of coal when he noticed that there was someone already in the room. This person came forward from his corner, where he had been engaged in softening the nether end of one candle in the flame of another so that it might hold fast in its sconce and not wobble, with his hand extended.

"Have I, sir," he asked, with the slightest of smiles, and an air of deference and courtesy, "the honor of beholding the author of the great treatise on the magnetical fluid?"

"You are too kind, sir," said Mainauduc, indicating to the waiter with but a flick of his eye that there

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was no objection taken to the stranger's presence and that the waiter might leave. "I am sensible of the compliment you pay me merely by having heard of my little pamphlet." And he bowed.

"Heard of it, Doctor?" cries the other man, a smallish, slender man, clad in dark garments. He holds up his finger as if to command attention, and begins to speak.

"'The magnet attracts iron, iron is found everywhere, everything is therefore under the influence of magnetism. It is only a modification of the general principle, which establishes harmony or foments discord. It is the same agent that gives rise to sympathy, antipathy, and the passions.' Have I not the passage right, sir? My name is Blee, sir: James Blee."

"I am enchanted to meet you, Mr. Blee. I commend your memory. However—" he seated himself at right angles to the fire "—you will doubtless recall that the passage you quote is not mine. *I* was quoting from the Spaniard, Balthazar Graciano." He spread his long fingers to the blaze. "Are you a physician, sir?"

Mr. Blee perhaps did not hear the question.

"Then try my memory on this, Doctor," he said. "'There is a flux and reflux, not only in the sea, but in the atmosphere, which affects in a similar manner all organized bodies through the medium of a subtile and mobile fluid, which pervades the universe, and associates all things together in mutual intercourse and harmony.' Were you . . . dare we hope . . . is it that . . . ?"

Dr. Mainauduc raised his dark brows.

"What is your question, Mr. Blee?"

"Can it be that London is destined to enjoy the great fortune which has hithertofore been Bristol's alone, Dr. Mainauduc? The reluctant tones of my voice must discover to you that I know I have no right to enquire, but . . ."

The mesmerist smiled. "It may be," he began; but at this moment the door was thrown open and two gentlemen entered, one nervously, the other laughing.

"Oh, pray, *pray* forgive me, Dr. Mainauduc—how d'ye do, Mr. Blee?—for my lateness," said the nervous gentleman, taking off his hat so hurriedly his wig came with it. He struggled to replace it, and, at the same time, gestured towards his companion, who rubbed his hands as he looked about the room and laughed. "This is Mr. Farmer, sir; Mr. Farmer—Dr. Mainauduc, Mr. Blee." He smiled faintly. His face was pale.

"Dr. Mainauduc, Mainauduc, very pleased. Mr. Blee, I hope you do well, well, well. Farmer by name, gentlemen," the other man said, "and farmer by profession, farmer by profession. What, what?" He then laughed once more at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

length and proceeded to repeat his remarks all over again. His face was ruddy.

Mr. Blee courteously asked if he had had good crops, and while Mr. Farmer was merrily discussing corn, hay, and wall-fruit with his questioner, Mr. Wentworth drew Dr. Mainauduc to one side, and spoke closely to his ear.

"The fact of the matter is, that I never saw this gentleman in my life before, till just above an hour ago, when he came into the barber's where I was having my hair attended to, and desired to be shaved. 'Tis my belief, sir, that he is some country squire unused to London ways," Mr. Wentworth said; "for when the man was finished, the gentleman said, oh, as blandly as you please, that he had no money. I presume he'd had his pocket picked, for one can see by his clothes that he *is*—"

"Oh, quite so," murmured Dr. Mainauduc.

"Have you not often wondered," Mr. Farmer chattered to Mr. Blee, "how the people do? How they live? What their lives are like? What they think, really think? Hey, sir? What, what?"

"Oh, frequently, Mr. Farmer!"

Wentworth murmured, "And so I thought best to pay for the barber, and then I really did not know how to get rid of him."

Dr. Mainauduc saw that his fellow-physician was considerably embarrassed at the introduction of two extra men to what was intended for a private meeting. He assured him that he did not mind, and said that, indeed, it was just as well, for they might get a lay opinion on the subject of introducing to London the practice of the Mesmeric therapy. And so they all four sat down to supper. There was beef and brawn and game pie and goose.

"I little thought to have this honor, Doctor," Mr. Blee said; "but, chancing to hear from Mr. Wentworth, of whose professional parts I bear the highest opinion, that *you* were to be here, I felt I must hazard it, and come to see the prophet of the new-found philosophy."

Wentworth, who had treated Blee for an amorous distemper, kept silence, but his principal guest smiled.

"Newly *re*-found philosophy, I should rather term it," Mainauduc said. "What was the laying on of hands but animal magnetism, anciently practiced? And in what other way did Elisha bring to life the dead child, but by conveyance of the magnetical fluid?" Wentworth nodded gravely.

Mr. Farmer, who had been talking with his mouth full, and smiling happily, suddenly threw down his knife. His face fell.

"Suppose—d'ye see, gentlemen—suppose a man makes mistakes—eh?—bad ones, very bad, bad, bad. Terrible losses. What? Now, now,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

oughtn't he have the chance, the chance, I say, to do better? Better? What, what? Well, so he must see for himself how things go. See for himself. Eh? How things go. Terrible losses. Was it not a thing to break your heart? It broke *my* heart. I never meant it to happen so—"

"Gaming!" Wentworth whispered to Mainauduc.

"To what losses do you refer, Mr. Farmer?" Blee asked, in a solicitous tone. "Did I not understand you to say the harvest was *good* this year?"

"The Mesmeric Method—" Wentworth began, rather loudly. Abashed, he lowered his voice. "Dr. Mainauduc is desirous of opening in London an institute for the practice of the Mesmeric Method of healing. In this, it is contemplated, I am to assist him." The faintest shadow of color came and went in his face. "What think you of the scheme, gentlemen? We, that is, he, should like to know."

Blee rose from the table and gave the fire a poke. The gray pyramid collapsed and the coals blazed up again, making the shadows dance. Mr. Farmer laughed.

"Is not this pleasant?" he cried. "I am so very much obliged to you for the pleasure. Pleasure. We dine simply at home. At home—eh?—we dine very simply. But there is such a degree of stiffness. Strain. Stiffness and strain."

Mr. Blee tapped the poker on the iron dogs. "Such an institution, if headed by such a man as Dr. Mainauduc, can not possibly do otherwise than succeed." The two physicians looked at one another, pleased. Their faces quickened.

"You will make a deal of money," Blee told the fire.

Wentworth looked hastily at a darned place on his hose, and crossed his legs. "It is the science, not the money. The money is not of any consequence to us."

"Not of the least consequence," Mainauduc said, easily. His coat and waistcoat were of French flowered silk. Blee turned from the fire.

"Gentlemen," he said in low tones, "pray give me leave to speak openly. The alchymists strove for centuries to make gold; that they succeeded, no one can say with certainty. But magnetism is the new alchymy. It *will* make gold, I *know* it. Already London is a-tremble with the reports of its success. People who would never go so far as Hackney to consult the best physician of the old school ever known, have gone all the way to Bristol to be magnetized by Dr. Mainauduc. You have only to throw open your doors in London, sir, to have your chambers thronged —with the richest . . . and the wealthiest . . ." His voice hissed upon the sybillants. He brought his dark, clever face nearer. "You will need a man of business. May I serve you?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The two physicians looked at one another. Dr. Mainauduc's lips parted. Mr. Wentworth inclined his head to the side. And, then, as abrupt as the bursting of a bubble, the mood or spell was shattered: Mr. Farmer, seemingly from nowhere, had produced a grubby child, and was patting its head and stroking its cheeks and asking what its name was and if it would like a glass of wine—all in a tone of boisterous good cheer, his eyes popping with joy.

"Now, damme, sir!" cries Blee, jumping to his feet in a rage and overturning the chair. The child begins to weep.

"Oh, pray, don't," Farmer implores. "I love children. Don't fret, poppet."

"Take care, Mr. Farmer," Wentworth warns him. "Do you not see the child is diseased? See the lesions—it is certainly scrofulous. Have done, Mr. Farmer!"

Then the waiter came, with many apologies, for it was his child, begged their pardon, took the boy away.

"Well, we shall think of your proposal, Mr. Blee." Dr. Mainauduc sat back, languid from food and fire, tired from his journey. "What, Wentworth, was the child with scrofula?"

"Assuredly, sir. Shall I call it back? Perhaps you wish to examine, or to treat it?" But the Doctor waved his hand. "King's Evil, is what the common people call it, you know. Scrofula, I mean to say. Some of them profess to regard it as beyond *medical* aid. They still remember that the monarchs of the former dynasty, as late as Queen Anne, used to 'touch' for it. An interesting ceremony it must have been. The touch of an anointed king, the common people say, is the only cure for it. Now what think you, Doctor, of sympathetical mummy, or capons fed with vipers?"

Dr. Mainauduc, who had been listening with a trace of impatience, cleared his throat. Blee stood once more by the fire.

"You mentioned, sir, my pamphlet, earlier in the evening—my pamphlet entituled, *A Treatise On The Magnetickal Fluid*. Whilst I was in Paris I met the eminent American sage, Mr. Franklin, and I presented him a copy, for it seems to me evident that what he calls the positive and negative of electricity is none other than the intension and remission of which that great giant of natural philosophy, Franz Anton Mesmer, writes. Mr. Blee—Mr. *Blee?*" But that gentleman was staring, his lower lip caught up beneath his teeth, at Mr. Farmer; and Mr. Farmer was weeping.

"Directly you mentioned Franklin, Doctor, he began to shed tears," whispered Wentworth. "Do you know, Doctor, I commence to think that he is an American himself—a Loyalist—and that the 'loss' he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spoke of was his property—or perhaps his son—in the Rebellion there. What think *you*, sir?"

"*I* commence to think, sir, that he is a man whom I am shortly to magnetize, for it is plain he is in need of it."

Doctor Mainauduc rose and blew out all but one of the candles. Wentworth's eyes glistened and he stepped nearer, but Blee retreated further into the gloom. Only a dull red glow now came from the fire. Dr. Mainauduc seated himself facing Mr. Farmer, touching him knee to knee. He took his hands in his.

"Attend to me now, sir," Dr. Mainauduc said.

"My head *does* ache," Mr. Farmer murmured.

"It shall presently ache no more . . . . Attend."

He gently placed Farmer's hands so they rested, palms up, on his knees, and slowly began to stroke them with the palms of his own hands. He did this for some time, then drew his hands along Mr. Farmer's arms, leaning forward, until they rested with the fingers touching the neck. Slowly his hands passed up the sides of the man's face, then withdrew till they were opposite his eyes. Again and again he repeated these passes. The candle's light glittered on the single ring he wore, and Wentworth saw the glitter reflected in Mr. Farmer's wide-open eyes. Mr. Farmer was motionless, and the noise of his heavy breathing died away. It seemed to Wentworth, as he watched, that a smoke or vapor, like a thin mist, or the plume from a tobacco-pipe, was exuded from the mesmerist's face and hands. And as Wentworth watched, he fancied that he saw strange scenes take form for fleeting moments in this miasmic suspiration: a procession of people in heavy robes and men with miters, a phantasm of silent men in violent riot, and noiseless battles on land and sea. Then all vanished, ghosts and mists alike. He heard once more the sound of Mr. Farmer's breathing, and Dr. Mainauduc had lit the candles and the light was reflected on the paneled walls.

Wentworth cleared his throat. Mainauduc looked at him, and there was terror in his eyes.

"We had better leave, you and I," he said, at last. "Do you know who your country squire is, your Loyalist?"

"*I* know," said Blee's voice from the door. He stood there, his sallow skin gone paler than Wentworth's, but a look of determination fixed upon his face. Behind him were two broad-shouldered, shifty-looking men. "We will take charge of Mr. Farmer, if you please."

"No, I think not," Mr. Farmer said. He stood up, an air of dignity upon him. "There has been enough taking charge of Mr. Farmer, and Mr. Farmer has a task to do."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh, sir, you are unwell," Blee said, in a fawning tone, and he sidled forward, followed by his minions. And then, without warning, the room was filled with men: constables with their staves in their hands, soldiers in red coats, Mr. Martinson the magistrate, a tall young man looking very much like Mr. Farmer himself, and others.

"You had better come with us, sir, I think," said the tall young man. Mr. Farmer slumped. The air of dignity fell from him. Then he laughed, vacantly.

"Very well, Fred, very well," he said. "Very well, very well. You think it best, what, what?" He shambled forward, stopped, looked over his shoulder. "These two gentlemen—" he indicated Dr. Mainauduc and Mr. Wentworth, "—treated me with great consideration. They are not to be bothered, d'ye hear?" The magistrate bowed. Mr. Farmer went out slowly, leaning on the arm of the tall young man, and muttering, "Bothered, bothered, bothered . . ."

Let us return to the *Memoirs*.

"On this occasion [Mainauduc writes] the entire Atmosphere was so saturated with the Magnetickal Fluid that there was cured in another part of the House a Child suffering from a Complaint long-seated and pronounced beyond help, *viz.*, Scrofula, or King's Evil. There was not a Lesion or Scar or Mark left, and all this without my even having touched him."

As to the identity of Mr. Farmer, Dr. Mainauduc is coy. He says only that he was "a Gentleman of exceedingly high Station, exceedingly afflicted. Had I been allowed to treat him further, a Privilege denied me, he might have been spared the terrible Malady which had already begun its Ravages, and which, save for a few brief periods, never entirely left him."

Thus far, on this subject—*The Memoirs of Dr. Mainauduc, The Mesmerist,* a man of his time—or behind his time, if you prefer; or, considering that mesmerism was the forerunner of hypnotism and that the study of hypnotism led Freud on to psychoanalysis, perhaps a man ahead of his time. Could he, perchance—or could anyone—really have cured "Mr. Farmer?"

It is impossible to say. If certain private papers of Frederick, Duke of York, still sealed to public inspection, could be opened, we might learn what truth there was —if any—to a curious legend concerning his father. Is it really so that he evaded all who surrounded him, and for six hours one day in early October of 1788 wandered unrecognized through London on some strange and unsuccessful quest of his own, in the month when it was finally deemed impossible to doubt any longer that he was mad —that longest-lived and most unfortunate of British Kings, George III?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sonnets in a Moonship

by STARR NELSON

"It is a most beautiful and delightful sight to behold the body of the Moone."
—Galileo.

Our ship rose on roaring flames, the volcanic emission
Searing suns in your eyes; the intolerable sound
Of our flight split the drums of your ears; and the wound
In the blood reopens; the red buds whose fission
Is the mortal storm in Man's veins blossom in fire.
For all men, unrest. But for us, now, *Brennschluss* is over,
The moment of death; and out of the shock of the river
Of dark sub-sonic waves the brain coils clear.
Now, running the lightning rails of empty air,
We know our limbs all weightless as in dreams
We dreamed on earth — on earth! — that monstrous ball
Upon whose strange dissolving face I stare! —
Out from my eyes queer small quicksilver streams
Of globules float, that break, but never fall . . .

Turn, turn to Luna's fair face, traveling ghost!
Was this the nymph Poseidon took to bride,
Whose capture raised the hot Atlantean tide?
Was this the white swan in the blueblack nest
Of *Omnium*? The enchantress all but speaks;
She swells upon the night — her golden rays,
Her ringwalls and her rills, her lucent mysteries;
From *Mare nubium* to the Flammarion peaks,
Her shadows and her fathomless deeps are ours.
Are ours but in a little while! — till then,
Let me bear down upon this curvetting pen,
Let me before the parching air burns frore
And glittering cold performs the effect of fire
Sing the sweet temperate earth, her dews and flowers.

© 1950 by Saturday Review Associates, Inc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This is a journey for lunatics or gods!
So may we rave, and clutch the worn artifact —
The knife, the ridiculous wallet, — changelings tricked
By fool's-fire, lost in the galactic woods;
Or, if these shapes be gods, whose tense young faces
Hover over charts and gauges, whose hands upon levers
Are solemn and sure with the daedal touch of the lover's, —
Think on those goddesses who, in far-off places —
O, in sweet far-off unforgotten home! —
Wait for one word, the postal scrawled in light,
The sign, the radar glyph across the night,
The flash unwinding the grim clocks of time,
The letter saying *All's well! The race is won!*
Saying *I love you*, signed *The Man in the Moon.*

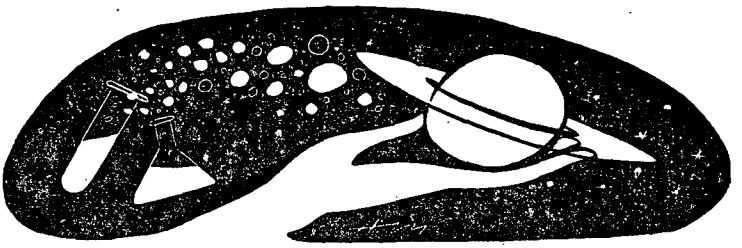
FOR MYSTERY FANS—these swiftly-paced mystery-thrillers are now on sale at your newsstand:

MERCURY MYSTERY BOOK-MAGAZINE—"Epitaph for a Virgin", by Robert Arthur. An exciting original novel by the well-known magazine, radio and TV writer; featuring tough ex-pug Max London and two beautiful women: Selma Carle, the model who poses in the nude but is, surprisingly, a virgin, and the voluptuous Meg Philips, who isn't. This issue also contains short pieces by Erle Stanley Gardner, Stuart Palmer, André Maurois and others.

A BESTSELLER MYSTERY—"The Book of the Crime" by Elizabeth Daly. "Ingenious" reports the *New Yorker.*

A JONATHAN PRESS MYSTERY—"Hand-picked to Die" by Richard Deming (formerly "Tweak the Devil's Nose"). "Light, tough, and sexy . . . Fast and furious" says the *Boston Globe.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Lost in a Braver (?), Much Newer World...

You won't want to miss Dan Davis' awakening in the Twenty-first Century, in part two of THE DOOR INTO SUMMER by Robert Heinlein. Tough, able, and imaginative in his own time, what will he do in a new world where his knowledge is hopelessly outdated, where his emotions and desires may well be entirely out of focus? Dan had woman trouble in his own century — can you imagine his efforts to apply what he learned then under the surprisingly different circumstances of the future?

In the same issue, exciting new stories by Isaac Asimov, Idris Seabright, Theodore R. Cogswell, and many others.

Ask your newsdealer to reserve a copy of the November issue for you — or use this coupon to subscribe.

MAIL THIS MONEY-SAVING COUPON TODAY

FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION F-10-6
527 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N. Y.

Please enter my subscription at once, to start with the next issue.

I enclose: ☐ $4 for 1 year ☐ $7 for 2 years

Name.....

Address.....

City.....*Zone*.....*State*.....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

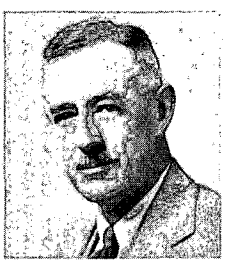
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Science Fiction Marches On . . .

The rising popularity of science fiction among the cultural leaders of the nation, as well as among the people at large, is ample testimony of its vitality and maturity. Engineers, physicians, chemists, statesmen, educators – they have all found pleasure and enlightenment in science fiction.

Now, Dr. Gilbert Highet, the distinguished classical scholar, critic, and judge of the Book-of-the-Month Club, reviewing his tenure as literary critic for *Harper's Magazine,* makes special point of *"the steady improvement in science fiction, or rather fantasy-fiction . . . ,"* and labels it as *"one of the most interesting general trends"* that he has observed recently.

And J. Donald Adams, former editor of the *New York Times Book Review,* author and editor of its celebrated page 2, "Speaking of Books," has given science fiction the accolade of the highest standards of literary criticism. He says:



"I am . . . convinced that science fiction, in spite of the vast amount of silly and clumsy writing the genre has spawned, is deserving of the serious attention it is only now beginning to receive. . . . It is at once a literature of escape and one deeply and earnestly concerned with mankind's present plight and its problematical future."

THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy and

Science Fiction

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED